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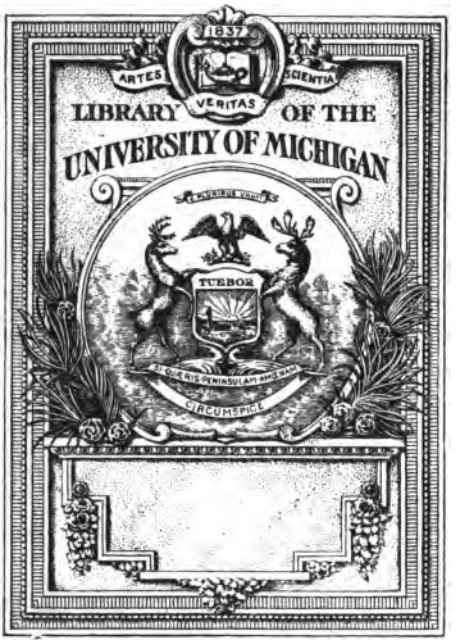
WITH CAVALRY IN THE GREAT WAR

FREDERICK COLEMAN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WITH CAVALRY IN THE GREAT WAR

THE AUTHOR

Frontispiece

WITH CAVALRY IN THE GREAT WAR

THE BRITISH TROOPER IN THE TRENCH LINE

Through the Second Battle of Ypres

BY
FREDERIC COLEMAN, F.R.G.S.
(*Author of "From Mons to Ypres with French"*)

ILLUSTRATED

PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO
1917

Dedicated

TO

MY WIFE

Whose bravery and self-sacrifice in the face of trying
circumstances made it possible for me so long
to continue to do the little that lay
in my power to help the
Cause we both
thought

JUST AND RIGHT.

31765

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE more than kind reception that Press and Public accorded my first book on the War, "From Mons to Ypres with French," has encouraged me to put together a chronicle of further events.

"With Cavalry in the Great War" takes up the thread of its narrative where its predecessor left it—with the closing days of 1914.

If some notes of frank criticism have been included in this volume, it has been with no unkindly feeling, or with any other object than to try to give a fair picture of things at the Front as I saw them.

My unbounded admiration for the splendid soldiers of the British Army, gained in the darker days of the Great Retreat from Mons, has never wavered in its allegiance to them.

Never have I had occasion to change my opinion, formed in the first few weeks of the War, that the British Tommy is worth five or six of any German soldiers with whom he has yet come into contact.

In the machinery and organisation of war, the small British Army was at a disadvantage, particularly when faced with the necessity of great and rapid expansion. That mistakes should have been made was more than natural —it was inevitable.

I would not be so presumptuous as to criticise so freely, but that "the old order changeth": to write of the past is, I hope, permissible, and likely to lead to no misconstruction. I mean no more than that which the plain interpretation of my simple phraseology will convey. I have no axes to grind.

The right men are in the British Army, and the right men are at the head of it.

For its work to be crowned with complete and lasting victory, it has but to have the undivided Empire behind it, and that, thank God, it has.

The man who cannot see that the Allies will win this war, and win it conclusively, is indeed blind to what the future holds for civilisation.

FREDERIC COLEMAN.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA,
June, 1916.

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CHAPTER I.

JANUARY 1st, 1915, found me in damp, sodden Flanders. I was one of the dozen remaining members of the original Royal Automobile Club Corps, which had joined the British Expeditionary Force in France before Mons and the great retreat on Paris.

I was attached, with my car, to the Headquarters Staff of the 1st Cavalry Division, Major-General H. de B. de Lisle, C.B., D.S.O., commanding. The Echelon A Divisional Staff Mess consisted of General de Lisle; Colonel "Sally" Home, 11th Hussars, G.S.O. 1; Major Percy Hambro, 15th Hussars, G.S.O. 2; Captain Cecil Howard, 16th Lancers, G.S.O. 3; Major Wilfred Jelf, R.H.A., Divisional Artillery Commander; Captain "Mouse" Tomkinson, "Royals," A.P.M.; Captain Hardress Lloyd,

4th Dragoon Guards, A.D.C.; Lieutenant "Pat" Armstrong, 10th Hussars, A.D.C., and myself.

We were housed in a château between Cassel and St. Omer. In the latter town General French and General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) were located.

The 1st Cavalry Division contained the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Brigades. The 1st Brigade, under Major-General Briggs, was composed of the 2nd Dragoons (Queen's Bays), 5th Dragoon Guards and 11th Hussars. Brigadier-General Mullens commanded the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, in which were the 4th Dragoon Guards, 9th Lancers and 18th Hussars.

These troops were billeted in Flemish farms and villages north of the road that led from Cassel to Bailleul.

Sir John French's army in the field at that time was composed of the 1st Army under General Sir Douglas Haig, and the 2nd Army under General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien. The corps units were as follows:—1st Corps, General C. C. Monro; 2nd Corps, General Sir Charles Fergusson; 3rd Corps, General Pulteney; 4th Corps, General Sir Henry

Rawlinson; Cavalry Corps, General Allenby; Indian Corps, General Sir James Willcocks; Indian Cavalry Corps, General Rimington; and the Flying Corps under General Henderson. Of the new 5th Corps, which was to be under the command of General Sir Herbert Plumer, only the 27th Division was as yet "out," though the 28th Division was ready to embark.

Most of the news parcelled out to those who were "resting" in billets back of the line came from the London newspapers.

Typed sheets, dubbed "summaries of information," and issued by G.H.Q., were distributed daily, but were never valuable and rarely really informative.

The G.H.Q. information sheet of January 1st, 1915, read: "The Germans made an attack on the right of our line, south of Givenchy, yesterday evening, and captured an observation post. This post was retaken by a counter attack early this morning, but later on was again captured by the enemy. The line has now been reorganized."

A friend in the 1st Army, which was covering the part of the line thus attacked, showed me the 1st Army summary of 7 p.m., January 1st,

which added the following to the news on the situation: "All is quiet in front. Fighting on right of 1st Corps last night was not as serious as at first reported. Casualties in Scots Guards believed to be about five officers and fifty other ranks. Most of these casualties occurred owing to the regiment pushing on beyond the original trench, and attacking the enemy's position. This wet weather is entailing great hardship on the men, who are fully engaged repairing trenches, some of which have had to be abandoned owing to water. The Germans are reported to be no better off."

Such brief, dry, official summaries applied to most of the wet days of January, 1915. Trench warfare in winter has a very stoggy sameness about it.

A 3rd Corps advance in front of the Ploegsteert Wood resulted in several of our men being drowned while attacking, so deep was the water in the submerged shell-holes in the flooded area.

Discipline, the capacity to go forward in pursuance of an order, in spite of the fact that doing so seems utterly futile, is possessed by the British troops to a remarkable degree.

Small operations, comparatively unimportant in scope and result, served to demonstrate daily the splendid spirit of the men under inconceivably trying conditions.

One trench at Givenchy was taken and retaken time after time, and the men ordered to capture the trench were ever found ready to "go up" in the same dashing way, though they knew to a man that the assault meant inevitable loss, and would more than likely be followed by a further enforced evacuation, by their own comrades, of the untenable position.

The Huns were well supplied with trench-mortars, bombs and hand-grenades, and used them with great effect. Our men had practically none of these indispensable attributes to trench warfare, or at least had so few of them that their use produced comparatively negligible results.

The Christmas truce between British and German units confronting each other in the trenches produced echoes for weeks. The order from General French stating clearly that "the Commander-in-Chief views with the greatest displeasure" such fraternizing with the enemy had produced a partial effect, but

instances still occurred where the Huns took the initiative in the matter of peace overtures for short periods.

A visit to one part of our front line unearthed the following story: The opposing trenches were separated by a highway, across which, one morning, a German soldier shouted, "Let's have a truce for to-day. We don't want to kill you fellows. Why should we kill each other? We are to be relieved by the Prussians to-morrow night. You can kill them if you like. We don't care. We are Saxons."

The extraordinary proposal was taken in good part, and the truce kept for thirty-six hours. No men of either army left their trenches, but not a shot was fired from German or English trench at that point.

A few miles from the scene of this incident the men of the opposing armies became quite accustomed to calling across the intervening ground to their enemies. Each side, one day, boasted of the excellence of its food supply. A British Tommy declared his lunch ration included an incomparable tin of sardines. A German soldier shouted his disbelief that Tommy possessed any such delicacy. There-

upon an empty sardine tin on the point of a bayonet was raised above the British trench parapet in proof of Tommy's statement.

"That's a sardine *tin*," yelled a Hun derisively, "but there is no sardine in it, mein friend."

A few minutes passed, then a tin of sardines, unopened and temptingly whole and sound was thrown from the English trench towards the trench of the enemy. It fell short. Over his parapet vaulted a big German, who dashed at the tin with outstretched hand. As his fingers were closing over it, it jumped from his grasp. Again he stooped and reached for it. Again it leaped away. Tommy had attached a thin but stout line to his sardine tin, willing to prove his assertion, but with no idea of losing his luncheon.

Two or three times the big Hun grabbed wildly at the elusive prize, amid the shouts and laughter of the men of both armies, who cheered in unison as Hans was at last convinced of the futility of further effort and retired in confusion to his trench.

In the early hours of the New Year a trench full of Westphalians and a party from a section

of our line held by the 4th Corps, fraternised to such an extent that visits were paid by each contingent to the "no-man's land" between the trenches. When the British soldiers returned to their trench, they found a man curled up in the bottom of it. Investigation showed him to be a German soldier.

"'Ere, git out o' this," said Tommy indignantly. "You're bloomin' well in the wrong 'ouse."

"No," said the Hun decidedly, "me prisoner, prisoner!"

"Not you," was the indignant reply. "Play the gime, you silly old 'Un, an' 'ook it."

But such was not the intention of the Saxon lad. With hands in air to indicate his abject surrender, he insisted he was a prisoner and refused to budge.

Nonplussed, the Tommies shouted over to the Germans: "'Ere's one o' your chaps 'ere as won't go 'ome, the silly beggar. 'E's lorst 'is way, poor chap, an' don't know where 'e are."

"Send him back to us, please," was the prompt request from the Deutschers.

But not a move would the Hun make, until

Members of the Staff outside the headquarters of the 1st Cavalry Division

face p. 8

Between Philosophe and Vermelles ; on the left, the château wall

see p. 27

at last half a dozen stout Tommies hoisted him over the parapet with the butts of their rifles. Still he tarried. With an oath a burly British corporal called two of his comrades. They leaped out of the trench, grabbed the hesitating Hun, and marched him at quick time to his own lines. There they turned him over to his officer, presented arms in salute, wheeled and marched gravely back to their own trench.

"What did the German bloke say when you chucked the chap to him?" was asked the corporal.

"Thynks," laconically replied that worthy, "an' no more, except to sye, 'We'll fix the rotter.' An' so they bloomin' well should—desertin' durin' a bally troose that wye—the dirty dog."

As the 1st Cavalry Division was "resting," visits to points of interest were the order of the day. On Monday, January 4th, General de Lisle, Captain Hardress Lloyd, and I ran, *viâ* quaint old Bergues and Dunkirk, to Furnes, where King Albert of the Belgians had his Headquarters.

Belgian sentries were plentiful after Dunkirk. They frequently stopped us, but generally the

word "Anglais" was a sufficient passport. Now and again Lloyd produced a British pass, at which the Belgians would invariably look blandly, if uncomprehendingly, then salute and urbanely wave us on our way. Any sort of pass would have served with ninety-nine out of a hundred such sentries.

The coast district in Belgium was not interesting in itself. Roadways ran between sluggish, morbid-looking canals and flat, dispirited fields—a sad, soggy, flabby land, in very truth.

Furnes was a picturesque relief. The architectural beauties of the Hotel de Ville and one or two other buildings in its fine old square were undeniable. Not long after our visit Furnes was viciously shelled by the Huns. Later it was practically devastated by big howitzer shells. Three or four days before our visit to the town a Black Maria had landed in a busy spot near the square one noontide, killing ten people and wounding a dozen others.

Nieuport, not far away, was under a heavy bombardment when we arrived in Furnes. Three days before sixty French soldiers had

been killed in one day in Nieuport, which had proved so great a death-trap that all troops had been moved to dug-outs outside the town.

I had a chat with one of King Albert's Staff whom I had previously met in London. He was a very outspoken critic of the Belgian officers, and of the policy that had resulted in the Belgian evacuation of Antwerp before such a *débâcle* was absolutely necessary.

We had lunch in Furnes with Colonel Tom Bridges. I had seen much of Bridges during the first months of the War, when he was attached to the 4th Dragoon Guards as a major. He led a charge at Tour de Paissy, on the Aisne, which saved the British line. Promoted to the rank of Colonel, he was given command of the 4th Hussars. A very few days afterwards, while on a night march, he was sent for by General Sir John French. Arriving at G.H.Q., Bridges, who had been the British Military Attaché in Belgium prior to the War and knew the Belgian Army well, was given certain instructions, placed in a Rolls-Royce car, and at once started for Antwerp. He arrived late at night, after a continuous run of over 600 kilometres, and saw King Albert,

who at once convened a Council of War. Bridges then jumped into the work at hand without a moment's delay.

Tom Bridges arrived in Antwerp on November 3rd. The city was evacuated by the Belgians on November 8th.

Having heard so much of the prominent part Bridges had played in the affairs of the Belgians, I looked forward with all the more anticipation to again meeting him.

Major Prince Alexander of Teck, attached to Colonel Bridges' mission, and Mrs. Bridges, who had recently been at work in the Duchess of Sutherland's hospital at Dunkirk, were at luncheon.

Colonel Bridges talked of King Albert. "The King gives to a stranger the impression that he comes to a decision slowly. I have heard men, who have met him, say they thought him extremely deliberate, but all recognise his solid foundation of determination. But for that rock on which the King's stern determination is set, there would be but little Belgian Army left to-day. To King Albert personally much more is due than is likely ever to be known."

The more I saw of the Belgian Army along the Yser, the more I appreciated what Bridges had said of the King.

After luncheon, I drove General de Lisle, Colonel Bridges and Hardress Lloyd to Nieuport-les-Bains, once a sea-coast summer resort at the mouth of the Yser. The Allied trench line was roughly the line of the canal. On the coast in the sandy dunes, the Allies' trenches had been pushed a bit to the Ostend side, but Dixmude was still in German hands.

Not a single inhabitant of Nieuport-les-Bains was in the town—not a man, woman or child. The French Tirailleurs d'Afrique, part of a splendid division of French Colonials that had been sent by Foch to "stiffen" that part of the line, occupied the ruins of the summer resort that was. The typical French summer hotels in Nieuport-les-Bains were, for the most part, shapeless piles of *débris*.

The Huns never succeeded in actually penetrating the town, though Von Beseler's troops tried hard to take it. The Germans reached the river bank which formed the town's boundary on the north.

The main thoroughfare was blocked at

frequent intervals by great barricades made from bathing machines, hauled in a row and filled with sand and paving stones. Asphalt tennis courts were scarred with shell-holes. No open space had been spared during the weeks of itinerant bombardment.

As we approached the town French batteries of "75's" were firing hard from positions in the dunes by the roadway.

The French General Officer Commanding arrived as we alighted from our car. But one house was standing in the northern edge of the town. Into it we filed on the heels of the French General, up its stair to the garret, and still up a rickety ladder to a point of vantage under the very eaves. Through shell-holes in the tile roofing, French observers directed the fire of the batteries below. Across the Yser, in front of us, we would see the French and German trenches among the low sand hills. For long spaces they ran but fifteen to twenty yards apart and in one sector a German sap was but five yards from the French escarpment.

For a time we watched the shells from the "75's" bursting over the German trenches.

Descending, we crossed the Yser practically at its mouth. A pontoon bridge, vaunting a placard showing it had been christened the "Pont Gal Joffre," led between twin piers. The bridge swayed and tossed like the deck of a channel steamer as we picked our way gingerly across it. Some months later a Jack Johnson, luckily placed by the enemy, entirely smashed that pontoon bridge.

Gaining the northern bank we zig-zagged through deep trenches in the sand, reinforced here and there with timbers and stone. An open crater and a pile of *débris* marked what had once been a lighthouse. Dug-outs, shelters in miniature, lined the sides of the crater nearest the Huns. The open bowl of sand was about forty feet in diameter. Near its centre gaped a shell-hole in the soft sand made by an unwelcome visitor which had come less than a half hour previously. Digging for a few moments, I unearthed the still warm timing-fuse of the 105-millimetre shell that had made the hole.

The lighthouse position was, the sergeant of Tirailleurs said, a *mauvais place.* From morning until night of the day before the Huns

had shelled it. Many shells had fallen in the hours just preceding our arrival. General de Lisle and Colonel Bridges left Hardress Lloyd and me there, "for safety," while they walked through the front line positions, which were from a hundred to a hundred and sixty yards further forward.

I investigated the interiors of the tiny dug-outs during the General's absence. No shell fell near, however, and soon we were all re-tracing our steps to Nieuport-les-Bains. Once a sniper spied one of the party, and a bullet from his rifle kicked up a spurt of sand a few feet from my head. We acknowledged the attention by an additional foot or so of "stoop" thenceforth.

Over a cup of tea at Colonel Bridges' head-quarters, I met an old acquaintance in Lady Ross, who had that day handed to the Queen of the Belgians a cheque for £1,000 for Belgian sufferers. Lady Ross told me of an interesting conversation with King Albert at luncheon. After discussing at length the general subject of the difficulty of realisation of war's hardships and atrocities by those whose homes have been far from the actual scenes of war, the conversa-

tion drifted to the refugee question. King Albert agreed that all able-bodied Belgians of military age should be with the Army, and declared emphatically his intention to press for steps that would lead to such a consummation.

The result of my visit to Furnes and Nieuport-les-Bains was to confirm my impression that the Germans had fortified their positions along the coast, and so entrenched themselves that to take Ostend by direct land attack was impossible, except at very great cost indeed.

The assistance that could be given by the Admiralty to such a project was greatly discounted by the fact that the ships available were out of range when outside the sandbanks that lay near the coast, and outclassed by the enemy's land batteries when inside the banks.

Many folk visited the Belgian Army in the trenches during those January days. Less than a week after we had visited Furnes, a couple of us ran to Dunkirk on Sunday to buy some fresh fish, a delicacy as rare as it was wholesome. While in Dunkirk I saw

Lord Northcliffe and my old friend Max Pemberton, who had come over for a "week-end at the Front" with the Belgians. The next day eighteen German aeroplanes flew over Dunkirk and dropped several bombs, doing some material damage and killing one civilian.

On Tuesday, January 12th, General de Lisle ran to Boeschoeppe, south-west of the St. Eloi area, to see General T. O'D. Snow and his 27th Division. While waiting for the General I had good opportunity to see and talk to some of the newly arrived men. They had been marched about fourteen miles before being put into the trench-line, then marched back to billets when relieved. Some had come back from eight to eleven miles on foot. As they were not supplied with changes of socks or any sort of patent solution for their feet, and as the trenches were at places knee-deep in water, a general epidemic of frost-bitten feet could but be expected.

Limping along the frozen road, with socks wound about their poor feet, I felt great sympathy for the Tommies. Before three days had passed I heard that the 27th Division

sick-list had been augmented by over two thousand cases of "bad feet." One Brigade Major in the Division told of over one thousand cases in his Brigade alone. A bad business, entailing great suffering and more permanent disablement than a little, all for want of proper foresight.

Small engagements with the enemy all along the line were constantly taking place. Official reports teemed with briefly and baldly told stories such as the following:—

"The following are details of the capture of a German trench to the north of La Bassée on the night of the 3rd-4th January.

"Time—8 p.m. January 3rd, 1915.

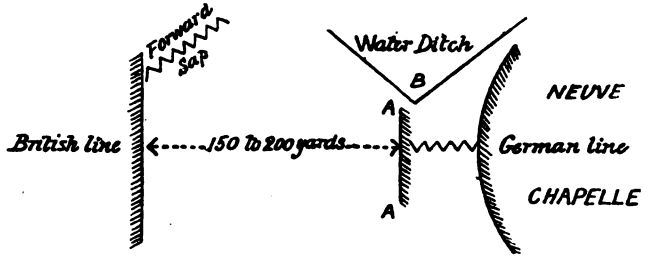
"Artillery—Nil.

"Strength of attack—One officer, twenty-five men.

"Distance between opposing trenches—150 to 200 yards.

"Enemy's trench consisted of a short length of trench which had been dug outwards from a saphead, and which was occupied by one officer and twenty-five to thirty men. (Two sentries.)

"Attack—The attack crept forward noiselessly to the trench A A, two German sentries were awake and were bayoneted, the occupants



were asleep and were all bayoneted; the officer's head was broken in with the butt end of a rifle—not a shot was fired—some men set to work at once and cut the ground A B, thus flooding the trench A A.

"The attackers were only fifteen minutes in the German trench and left the bayoneted Germans in the water, which was then running in from the water ditch. A A was only a short length of trench without wire.

"British casualties—One wounded and two missing. The latter may have since returned."

Quiet days found many a British soldier hard at work over a French-English "conversation-book." Some of these were hurriedly

prepared and of a character truly extraordinary. One such book, made up for the benefit of an industrious young man, contained a question that, translated, ran thus:—

"Q. Where is the cat of my mother's aunt?"

"A. No, but the kittens are drowned."

In Vermelles, on January 15th, I took a dozen photographs showing the devastation that can be worked by French high explosive shells.

Vermelles was an object lesson. Held by the Germans as strongly as any town was held in front of the French position south of the La Bassée canal, trenched and barricaded with wonderful skill, and well supported by a mass of guns, its capture was only effected after weeks of sapping and an artillery bombardment that had up to that time been without parallel. Its ruins held texts for innumerable sermons on the newer strategy of present-day warfare.

A French officer of standing had told me that he considered the taking of Vermelles from the Germans a most hopeful sign that the French could take any and all German

positions in like manner, if they cared to pay the price in men and ammunition.

Geographically, Vermelles was in what was bound to prove a "warm corner." The German thrust westward from La Bassée, with Bethune as an objective, had cost the British Expeditionary Force some of the hardest fighting it had seen.

In that area our Second Corps, then the Indian Corps, and lastly our First Corps, with the French troops at times in action with us, had withstood a battering that no other point in the long line from the sea to the Vosges, save possibly the Ypres Salient, had been called upon to stand.

The German advance to the westward had reached Vermelles, and there been held. Their farthermost line was in front of the western edge of the town, and close to the main road that led through it. The enemy was in possession of Vermelles for a couple of months.

As no English troops had participated in the taking of Vermelles from the Huns, except for the assistance rendered by some of our heavier batteries, we knew little of what had happened in that theatre save that six weeks of sapping,

a mad rush after an unprecedented bombardment, and terrific hand-to-hand bayonet fighting in the streets, had resulted in the French occupation of the town on December 7th.

Our visit had been arranged for us by Captain Fresson, the French liaison officer attached to 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters. General de Lisle, Colonel Home, Major Hambro, Fresson and I were in the party.

Coming out of Bethune, on the Lens road, we passed through Beuvry, then through Shilly-Labourse.

In the fields by the roadside were trenches, increasing in frequency along the road from Sailly to Noyelles-lez-Vermelles.

When Noyelles was passed, and we could glance across the slightly rolling fields that led eastwards to Vermelles, a mile distant, a little world of trenches met the eye. Some giant, prehistoric mole, crazed with pain and bent on expending his agony on the surface of Mother Earth, might have so ripped the fields.

Not rows of trenches, but curved and twisting galleries upon galleries of them. For the first time I began to get an inkling of what real

trench warfare—the battles of the pick and shovel—meant.

At the headquarters of the French General who was in command of that section of the line a most elaborate *déjeuner* had been prepared for the party, with the result that it was well into the afternoon before we left the hospitable Frenchman and, in tow of a member of his staff, commenced our tour of sight-seeing.

Most buildings thereabouts were shell-scarred; some were burned. No inhabitants were to be seen. The boom of distant shells was ever present, and now and then one burst in sight of us. Detachments of French infantry marched past frequently.

We ran to Noyelles, which was full of hard-as-nails-looking French soldiers.

There the party alighted, and guided by a young French infantry officer, who had seen the fighting over that ground, walked across the trench-scarred battle-field eastward to Vermelles.

I followed sufficiently far to gain an idea of the lie of the land, then returned to Noyelles and took my car to Vermelles by road, arriving in advance of the others. This allowed me

a long stroll of inspection, to be augmented later by a second tour in the company of the General, with a French Staff officer as escort.

The German first line trenches to the west of the town were well constructed. Though they had been considerably damaged by the rain of shells that had been poured on them, they were not as badly demolished as one might expect. Back of this first line of defence was a second line, weaving in and out—here in front, now behind, now through, the string of houses on the west of Vermelles' main street.

In the southern portion of the town were the ruins of the Château Watteble. The grounds of the once imposing château allowed a sufficiently clear space for still another formidable trench-line. Behind that the enemy had placed other lines, burrowing here and there at points of vantage through the town. Adjacent to the château were piles of bricks that once had been a fine farm, the Ferme Brion, and in front of it, completely demolished, and bearing no semblance of shape or form that would indicate its original outlines, was a chapel, where a German gun had been placed. This gun, a French officer told me,

had been served gallantly until the French were but fifty yards distant, when a battery of the famous "75's" found the range and totally annihilated the gun, the chapel, and any of the enemy who were so unfortunate as to be in its vicinity.

The church, its square tower battered out of shape, was still the most conspicuous landmark of the country round. Another sample of devastation was the brewery, and attached to it an elaborate dwelling, one portion of which was built over a metal frame. All the covering had been torn from the iron girders, leaving the mere skeleton of the framework practically intact, a weird sight.

The German trenches and communications burrowed so consistently everywhere from the western edge of the town, and on through to the eastward, that every foot of ground afforded opportunity for study. These lines of defence, all connected and fed by approach trenches, cleverly constructed, with their traverses and reserve off-shoots, led away for hundreds of yards to the rear of the front line.

That, then, was the town the French had to face, defended by machine-guns in splendid

emplacements, every position well manned. The first line commanded an open front of slightly rising ground, clear of all obstacles and capable of being swept for 800 to 1,000 yards. Military science in trench construction had been aided by ingenuity of a high order, and hours of wandering over and through the rabbit warrens made for men, as cleverly as ever rodent designed his burrow, found one discovering new wonders at every step.

The trenches proper were for the most part deep and narrow, stout of wall, reinforced with every manner of material likely to strengthen the defensive ramparts and bastions. Here the thickness of a piece of house wall had been doubled by sandbags. There the face of a trench had been reinforced by huge stones, interspersed with all sorts of receptacles, such as water-buckets, cooking utensils, wheel-barrows, and all manner of tins, filled with brick, small stones or cement.

A woman's bodice neatly tied about a few pounds of stone, the wooden cover of a household sewing-machine, loaded with brick, and even a stout brown-paper cardboard box full of mortar, caught my eye as I searched the

stoutly-built wall curved round and back and round again through what had once been a house-yard. Traverses that demanded admiration from the most apathetic student of engineering, loops of trenches that commanded every front, approach trenches that wriggled like some great yellow-brown snake off toward the rear, were perfect each one in its own way.

Practically every point in the town could be reached by a German on tour of inspection of its defences, without the necessity of his leaving cover, save to cross the roadway of the main thoroughfare. Beside all this under-the-surface protection, the shelter of the buildings, all constructed of brick or stone and strongly built, was by no means to be despised.

Truly, when the French officer said no place could be made more secure, there was some reason for his words. But strong as it was, and in spite of its splendid artillery support, the position was one that the French had to take, whether or no. Six long weeks of constant work was represented by those torn and wounded fields that stretched away westward to Noyelles. Sapping their way, entrench-

A bird's-eye view of shattered Vermelles, January, 1915

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Major Desmond Fitzgerald of the Lancers and a gas-pipe trench-mortar

see p. 50

ing and consolidating every forward step, the little men in red and blue crept up to a line varying by from one to two hundred yards, and even nearer at one point, to the German front.

But sapping and mining, and entrenching and consolidating, so valuable in themselves, responsible for the finely fortified position of the Germans in Vermelles, and the splendid mole-advance against them by the French, was not the chief factor that was to play the decisive part in the war-game that culminated in the capture of the town on December 7th.

Gun-fire was the decisive element. To the beloved "soixante-quinze" was to go the chief honour. Only a careful personal inspection of the town could tell one the real story of Vermelles as I saw it on January 15th. The camera might assist, and, in spite of the dull weather, I obtained a few pictures with that end in view, but the camera could give one the story only haltingly and in part.

Not one building in all the town was unwrecked. The French "75's," with some aid from the British howitzers, reduced Vermelles to ruins in the most literal and complete sense.

Every edifice, from the piles of brick around the few tottering walls that was once a proud château to the humblest barn or outbuilding, was in itself a study. The evidence left by such shell-fire of its power for evil is of fascinating interest owing to its infinite variety. One wall had withstood half-a-dozen punctures of varying diameter, holes four or five feet in width, some of them, while its fellow beside it had crumbled into a formless mass of *débris*. Side by side were two houses, one with front practically intact, its roof gone and its interior and back portion blown to bits, the other minus front wall, but still standing, its roof at a crazy angle, resting insecurely on the remainder of the building, which, save for a scar here and there, escaped comparatively untouched.

It is this caprice of shell-fire that makes such a veritable hell of it.

Trenches with sides blown in; here a hole like a good-sized cellar; there a traverse filled to the level of the ground around it; a gap in the defence wall in front; iron-work twisted into grotesque shapes; stone-work pulverised; *débris* in piles; with clothing, bedding, house-

hold implements, farm machinery and gear, child's toys, religious emblems, personal effects, and bundles of every description, all jumbled together in such an odd, unnatural way, that a laugh and a catch in the throat often came together.

Vermelles on that sodden day in January was full of French soldiers in reserve—men of the 131st and 262nd Infantry Brigades, some from 16th and some from 18th Corps units. The firing line proper was from three to four kilometres to the eastward. On the west side of the town a French battery was firing regularly, the shells singing over our heads. The German shells were falling frequently half a mile in front of us.

It was my good fortune to discover a French soldier who had seen the actual final bayonet attack which won the position. His story was graphic, but told in few words. The creeping up to the forward French trenches, the fierce bombardment, the wild charge, the discovery that in spite of the fact that the place had been literally blown to bits, and German dead strewn everywhere, some defenders still held on and manned the murderous machine-guns,

until they felt the cold steel—it all seemed so matter-of-fact, and such a matter-of-course sort of story in such surroundings.

In each of the yards of the better-class dwellings and farms, including the grounds of the château and brewery, were graves of German soldiers. Many of these were marked with rude crosses bearing touching inscriptions. One such epitaph that caught my eye described the dead soldier as a good comrade; another as a brave man who had died for the Fatherland. Many of them bore a simple religious touch. One grave covered a German officer, buried by the French after the capture of the town. The French soldiers had marked his name and a respectful word or two on the rude cross above it, in obvious keeping with the inscriptions the Germans had written on adjacent crosses raised while they were in occupation.

In an effort to tell me how full the redoubts were of German dead, when Vermelles was at last taken, my soldier guide found that words failed him. They were everywhere, he said.

Many of the graves, particularly those of the

A winter Cavalry shelter in France

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Construction ot Cavalry shelter in France

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French soldiers buried thereabouts, were headed by black or white metal wreaths.

"It cost dear," said my soldier, "and we paid. But a Boche who lived through the last few days of the fighting here, and escaped from that last charge, will be able to tell a story."

The deep cellar of a ruined house—a mere brick arched cell of a place without a ray of daylight—had been quite habitably fitted up as a cave-dwelling by the Germans, who had saved a piano from one of the wrecked rooms above and cosily stowed it away in a corner.

One or two underground caves just back of the German front line of trenches, bomb-proofs for the officers apparently, were ingeniously secure.

Though Vermelles at the time of our visit had been in French hands for more than a month, one could find many such souvenirs as shell-heads and timing-fuses without troubling to stir the piles of wreckage.

I could, I thought, sit in Vermelles and write reams of detail in description of the terrible havoc of war, but I found that mere generality as to the scenes of desolation wrought in the town soon used up my vocabulary. The place was no less a graveyard of brave men than of

strenuous human effort, none the less to be admired because it proved abortive. Over all brooded the horror of war and the more specific and tangible horror of gun-fire. "Low trajectory and high explosive are twin demons, and this is their devil's work," the shattered town seemed to say.

Knots of French soldiers or visiting British officers walked about sombrely and spoke in low tones, as if in the actual presence of the dead, in spite of the weeks that had flown by since Vermelles had echoed to the crash of a bursting shell.

The French soldiers were a tough-looking lot of customers. A bit nondescript as to uniform, and universally campaign worn, unshaven, and mud-plastered, they looked stout and fit for anything. A friendly class of men, respectful to British officers to a degree, a fact that spoke not only of good discipline, but of fine French traditions of politeness. They impressed me as splendid war material, and more, as men of fine character and indomitable determination.

Sport behind the lines began to assume quite a healthy state in January. Packs of beagles and hounds and pairs of greyhounds were

brought "out" by enthusiasts, and cross-country courses with rare jumps were carefully mapped out.

Alas! for "Le Sport." An order came along one day from G.H.Q. which stated that "the Commander-in-Chief regrets that it is necessary to prohibit any more hunting, coursing, shooting, or paper-chasing. This order comes into effect at once."

The 2nd Cavalry Brigade drew up a splendid steeplechase programme, which the state of the ground would not have allowed, had no order from G.H.Q. been promulgated.

A card of "beagle-meets" was issued, and formed the following somewhat pretentious propaganda :—

"THE 2ND CAVALRY BRIGADE BEAGLES WILL MEET—

SUNDAY	Jan. 3rd, C Squadron 4th Dragoon Guards.
TUESDAY	Jan. 5th, St-Jans-Cappel, Berthen, Cross Roads.
THURSDAY	Jan. 7th, Headquarters 9th Lancers.
SATURDAY	Jan. 9th, Berthen.
MONDAY	Jan. 11th, H Battery.
WEDNESDAY	Jan. 13th, Headquarters 18th Hussars.
FRIDAY	Jan. 15th, St-Jans-Cappel Church.
SUNDAY	Jan. 17th, Headquarters 4th Dragoon Guards.

Each day at One o'clock."

The Prince of Wales ran more than once with that pack of beagles, and ran well.

Football matches were allowed, and were daily fought out between the various regimental teams.

General Robertson succeeded General Murray as Chief of the Staff at G.H.Q., a change generally welcomed, as Robertson was held in very high esteem throughout the Army. Many of us considered him the greatest man the British Army had produced throughout the campaign. That is certainly how I should describe him.

CHAPTER II.

BROKEN car springs on February 1st took me to Poperinghe, where a Belgian carriage-maker made a villainous repair for a considerable charge.

Motor car repairs were fearfully and wonderfully executed at the front in the earlier stages of the war. The G.H.Q. shops were not bad, and once in a while I found clever, conscientious young chaps in charge of a road-side repair shop attached to a division, an ammunition supply column, or some such unit, who had managed to organise a very creditable "first-aid and emergency hospital" for the ills a car was heir to.

All too often some A.S.C. officer in charge, however, knew as little of the mechanism of an automobile and how to put it in order as one could well imagine. I remember one youth, possessed of a wonderful opinion of his own efficiency, whose mechanical experience had been gained in a railway workshop. He ordered repairs to be done in weird fashion at times.

As soon as he had delivered his dictum and departed, his chief non-commissioned officer would put the men right, generally by a complete reversal of the youngster's orders, and all would go happily until he might again put in an appearance, when the work would suffer proportionately to the time he spent in its vicinity.

Stories of the excellence of the performance of individual cars were often marvellous. One big limousine, which had been "out since the first of the show," was ever the boast of the Major to whom it was assigned and of his faithful chauffeur. At tea one day it transpired that the car, which the Major was always ready to declare had run *sans repaire et sans reproche* during the whole campaign, was in the repair park for its "initial derangement." Calling at the repair lorry early next morning, I was astounded to hear the A.S.C. sergeant-major in charge say to the major's chauffeur: "So you have done in the old girl again, have you? Let's see, that's the third time this month, ain't it? Why the Major hasn't sent the bally old wreck in months ago to get her put in decent shape, I don't know. Not a bit of use

tinkering at her all the time. She's given us more bother than any car in the division."

How we did chip the Major! Motorists' yarns bear some odd relationship to fishermen's stories, so I have heard.

Taken generally, the British cars at the Front ran most creditably. The conditions could not have been more trying, and the Daimlers and Rolls-Royces lived up to their reputations in fine style. Cars of half a score of makes were attached to the 1st Cavalry Division while I was with it, and I studied their performances with close attention. For reliability and lack of trouble a large Daimler easily bore away the honours.

Cold forges and a disinclination on the part of the smith to light them on an afternoon necessitated my spending a night in Poperinghe. The town was crowded with Belgian inhabitants and refugees, and with French troops of the 16th Corps, which was at that time being relieved from the trench work by British soldiers, and was mobilising in Poperinghe to be sent south and east, detachment after detachment, to its own dear France.

A winter in Flanders, particularly in Flemish

trenches, is not a happy experience. The French were therefore openly delighted at the prospect of departure to more pleasant and congenial climes.

I should have had to sleep in my car but for the kindly offices of a French Staff officer, who procured for me a clean, soft bed in the Hotel La Bourse.

An evening among French soldiers, though they might be tired, trench-stained and campaign worn, was sure to be a pleasurable one. Songs from *chansons d'amour* to grand opera, from poor Harry Fragson's "Marguerita," to swinging marching airs of older wars, were sung with a vim.

The French troopers possessed a suspicion of the grand air when drinking a toast, carolling a love-ditty, or roaring out a rousing chorus. One or two veterans I met in Poperinghe might have stepped from a volume of Dumas. An elder one was a bachelor of arts and science, a man of studious and thoughtful mien. His comrade was a true Gascon, and a third of the group was blessed with powers of mimicry that made us laugh long and loud before the night was over.

Every man of them was proud and fond of his British allies.

French soldiers did not pay the same attention to cleanliness of uniform and kit that was given to such details by the British Tommy. An English battalion, relieved from muddy trenches, at once smartened its external appearance to a degree that had to be seen to be believed. Tommy worked wonders in a day.

The long-tailed blue coats of the French infantry were difficult to clean, once they became mud-caked.

The amount of equipment, and its variety, that the average French foot-soldier strapped upon his back, was wonderful. I saw one black-bearded "poilu," with a typical load, start off with his company for a long, long march, with literally as much as he could pack about him, fastened securely by ingenious means. Over either shoulder was a strap supporting two good-sized canvas haversacks, one on each hip, both bulging with food. To his belt were attached two ample cartridge-pouches, one in front and one behind. A water-bottle dangled against a haversack. His principal pack, hung at the shoulder, was, he told me, full of spare clothing.

A blanket, rolled in a sheepskin jacket, surmounted this and towered above his cap. A cooking-pot adorned the back of his pack, while to one side of it was strapped a tin cup of ample dimensions, and to the other a loaf of bread, already become soggy in the steady drizzle. A bundle of firewood at his side, and a roll of clothing, holding an extra shirt or two, at the other, flanked him.

My examination of his equipment concluded, he said he must be off, and picked up his rifle with a cheery smile. A comrade rushed up and handed him a sort of leather portmanteau. He grabbed it without a word, threw the strap over his head, settled his various pieces of baggage into place with a strenuous shake, and stamped away sturdily, with a firm step and head held high.

He left me wondering that this sort of soldier should make marching records of which any army in the world might be proud, yet such was undeniably the case.

In billets, the British cavalry were having a thorough course of instruction in the work of the foot soldier. Dismounted attack, trench digging, musketry instruction, bomb-throwing

classes, and all manner of miscellaneous tutelage progressed steadily.

I had a look at Ypres one morning. It was again peopled with a sufficient number of civilians to give me a sense of forgetfulness as to its proximity to the German gun positions.

Of all the attributes of the Belgian people, their persistence in making back to their homes in a shelled area, as soon as the shells ceased falling, was the most prominent.

Many of the peasants pursued their daily round of labour under shell-fire. Many others left the bombarded fields or villages, albeit reluctantly, only to return as soon as the shell splinters had ceased to spatter about.

What feeling actuated them was a psychological study. They were phlegmatic as a people. I have seen Russian soldiers perform feats that were described by different observers of the same episode as bravery or stupidity, according to the reading of the onlooker. Was the Belgian who drifted back to his own or some other man's home in shell-ruined Ypres brave or thick-headed? I left one opinion for another, only to abandon it in turn. A study of various types in Flanders helped me but little.

Hard-worked toilers, whose lives have been one continual round of labour, are, more often than not, fatalists. Such lives produce men and women who accept conditions blindly and uncomplainingly. A peculiar love of the soil which they have tilled, and from which they have sprung, seemed to take the place in many Flemish peasants of the more definite and definable Anglo-Saxon or Gallic spirit of intense patriotism. Many poor folk seemed possessed of a blind instinct that "home" was safest, and once "home" was lost, nothing worthy of preservation remained. Their attitude toward death bordered on indifference.

Motor-buses were bringing the 28th Division to the Ypres Salient as I passed on my homeward journey.

Rumours of an attack on the German line flew from lip to lip. That night I read from an eminent French military authority that "to attack, unless with a definite object in view, with a very reasonable chance of success, and with the surety that you can hold what you gain if the attack succeeds, is a crime."

In the second week in February, at a dinner in St. Omer, a member of the French Mission

at British Headquarters told me that eighty-seven French general officers had been "relieved of their command" since the commencement of the war. These generals were "sent down" for incompetency, evidenced in various ways, to command the troops under them. The extremely small number of British generals who had been "replaced" stood out in very sharp contrast to this total, with which fact should be remembered the complete difference as to policy with reference to such replacements between the French and British War Office methods.

Early in February, the 1st Cavalry Division staff was blessed with the arrival of Major Desmond Fitzgerald (11th Hussars), who took Major Hambro's place as G.S.O. 2.

The total tally of British casualties was announced during the first week in the month as 104,000, having exceeded, in less than six months of warfare, the numerical strength of the original British Expeditionary Force.

A day "in front," with the engineers, mapping out new trenches and reserve positions, showed to how great an extent modern gun-fire had changed military theory.

Before the War, a trench line was sought in a position that commanded a good "field of fire," *i.e.*, that had in front of it as much open ground as possible.

This war had taught that the most important item in the selection of a trench position was the extent to which the line could be hidden from the enemy gunners. The space commanded by the occupants of the trench and the nature of the terrain were secondary to the cardinal point of keeping the trenches well out of sight of enemy observers.

Thus engineers might, years ago, select a hilltop as a trench position, the line commanding the receding slope to the valley below. After the experience of the greatest of all wars, they would preferably place it fifty yards behind the summit. More than fifty yards of "field of fire" was desirable, but not absolutely necessary. A fifty-yard space could be so covered with wire entanglements as sufficiently to delay an attacking enemy. Deep, narrow trenches with traverses to restrict the area of damage from shells bursting in the actual trench, and to protect from enfilade fire, were demanded by the newer conditions, but

great care had to be taken that they should not be constructed in ground of so soft a nature that howitzer fire could too easily cave in the trench sides.

We found it possible to select a trench line that could be well concealed, which, if taken by the enemy, would be under perfect observation from our own gunners and by them easily rendered untenable for the Huns.

That the British were clever in this work of placing trenches in invisible positions was proven by the following report of an interview in Courtrai with a wounded German officer, whose regiment had been badly handled when attacking an English position in the Ypres Salient :—

"Our artillery cannonaded incessantly the enemy trench which our company was to storm —we could see it in the distance. Towards evening we were ordered to advance. We marched forward without taking cover, confident enough, because not a shot came from the British trench. We thought it had been abandoned after the terrible bombardment to which it had been subjected all day long. To make things quite safe, when we were 200

metres from the trench our mitrailleuses were brought into action and we gave the silent enemy another good peppering. Still there is no reply. The place must certainly be empty. Shouting 'Hurrah,' we rush forward to seize it, but we have not gone more than 100 metres before our whole front rank is stricken down by a volley from a point much nearer than the trench we had been shelling, and in addition to this terrible infantry fire the British quick-firing guns are brought into play, and simply mow our men down. Six times we reform to continue our assault; six times we are knocked to pieces before we can get going. At last such officers as are left realise that there is nothing to be done, and we retreat to our original position.

"This is how the English work it. The entrenchment, visible from afar, which we had bombarded, was not the spot where their troops were to be found. They were stationed in small subsidiary trenches in front of the principal trench, with which they were connected by means of narrow passages. The little advance trenches were concealed to perfection, and the troops sheltered beneath

sheets of metal on which our German bullets ricocheted. So we had been shelling an unoccupied trench and had done no damage to the place where the enemy actually was hidden. Hence it is not surprising that our 'assault' should have proved to be—for us—a veritable massacre."

Careful study of German methods of counter-attack were productive of many an idea.

The Hun counter-attacks were delivered immediately after the loss of a position—as successful counter-attacks must be.

A trench which was thought a good defensive one by its occupants was sometimes attacked by the Germans, taken, and immediately transformed into a good defensive trench from the other point of view. The way in which the German first line of attack was followed by a second line, bearing shovels, barbed wire, bombs, and grenades, and the manner in which this second line was put to work, showed that the brain conducting operations was close at hand, if not actually on the spot.

The planning and carrying out of some of these small attacks were worthy of great

praise. Our troops soon caught the idea and put it into practice with increasingly beneficial results.

On Sunday, February 21st, the 2nd Cavalry Division were in the trenches in the Ypres Salient. The Huns exploded a mine in front of Zillebeke and took sixty yards of trenches that were occupied by the 16th Lancers. A counter attack, delayed a bit, was launched unsuccessfully, and cost the cavalry four officers killed, one died of wounds, one missing (thought sure to be killed), and four wounded—ten officers in all, and about fifty per cent. of the men engaged.

The Canadian Division arrived in France in mid-February—a splendid lot of men.

Trench-mortars and bombs of various sorts put in an appearance and classes were held daily to accustom the men to the new types of trench weapons. A 3·7 affair of gas-pipe, throwing a 4½-pound projectile, was the most prevalent mortar. Prematures and accidents of all kinds accompanied its introduction, and more than one good man was killed before the troops learned the intricacies of the bombs.

General Foch was at Cassel with his Head-

quarters. Dinner in Cassel was always productive of a talk on instructive and entertaining subjects. The average French Staff officer was wonderfully "keen on his job."

The French system of espionage was by no means to be despised. The reports from their "agents" were astonishingly accurate.

That Staff work should be the subject of many an after-dinner chat was but natural. The French view of the difference between French and British Staff work, compiled from many a conversation with officers of all ranks, I understood to be generally as follows:—

British Staff work could not fairly be compared to French Staff work, because of the lack of opportunity accorded the British Army, before the War, to handle large bodies of troops. Furthermore, the English Army contained many officers who entered the Army as something in the nature of a pastime rather than a serious profession. Some of these officers even went through the Staff School, though lacking that devoted concentration on their profession as a life-work, which characterised their French prototypes. Very few officers entered the French Army and qualified for staff positions

who did not look upon a military career in a very serious light. French Staff officers gained their steps by force of sheer merit and close application to their work.

Nothing else counted, they said. Not a big staff, but one that was efficient beyond all question, was the French aim.

The British soldier, I found, was in most instances frankly conceded to be the best war material in the field—friend or foe. That the British leaders often bungled was openly alleged, but by no means always proven in argument, at least, to my satisfaction.

A failure to arrange support, a badly planned attack, bad Staff work here and there, were quoted in more than one instance.

"It is the soldier who suffers," said one of the most brilliant Frenchmen with whom I met. "He suffers in silence. Perhaps he what you call 'grouses,' but he stands it. The French soldier would *not* do so in anything like the same spirit. The waste of men and the bad handling of them that once or twice I have seen on the British front, would ruin a French commander for ever."

Universally the French officers praised

General Sir Douglas Haig. He had completely won their admiration at Ypres.

"But the best of the British Staff work," said another French officer, "is that it is improving. The English are not afraid to admit they don't know, and are quick to absorb new ideas. Give them time."

I have quoted the more trenchant criticisms that came to my ears, for they fell from the lips of the keenest and most brilliant French Staff officers, invariably those who held the British Tommy in the highest possible esteem.

These officers were from the class of man one would choose to put in charge of a dry dock, a line of railway, a huge business or a gigantic manufactory. They impressed me as good "business men." More than a few British Staff officers I met, particularly in the Cavalry arm of the Service, were equally clever, and every whit as keen on their work, but no one who wished to be impartial could fail to note the inclusion now and then, on the Staff, of men to whom one would never dream of entrusting the management of a large commercial organisation or the conduct of an important factory plant.

The 3rd and 2nd Cavalry Divisions having

each done ten days of trench occupation in the Ypres Salient, on February 23rd, the 1st Cavalry Division moved to Ypres to take its ten days of duty in the firing line.

The run to Ypres, *viâ* Steenvoorde and Poperinghe, was a trying one. The road surface was inconceivably damaged and very slippery. All manner of French and British transport and general traffic filled the highway.

In the western edge of Ypres, in front of the first cluster of houses—buildings shell-marked and war-scarred from long bombardment—three grimy mites were playing in the dirt at the street-side. Further on, a trio of little girls in soiled black frocklets were enjoying a game of tag. Across the street they darted, under the wheels of cars and lorries, missing the hoofs of the passing horses by inches. One bright-eyed little girl, out of breath from dodging a fast-drawn artillery limber, took momentary refuge in a ragged gap in a shell-shattered dwelling. As we approached the Grand Place more children were to be seen, then a number of adult townsfolk. Round the gaping ruins of the once beautiful Cloth Hall, in the main square, the number of people in evidence might

The Rue de Menin in March, 1915, looking west over the Menin Bridge across the canal moat

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Officers under the stone lion on the Menin Bridge at Ypres

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well have led one to believe that the bombardment of Ypres was past and done with. Ruins, the work of shells and conflagrations, were on all sides, but no one noticed them. French and English soldiers and their officers, with a liberal smattering of civilian Belgians, filled the pavements. Down the Rue de Menin, at the approach of the Menin Bridge, we found the headquarters of General Hubert Gough, of the 2nd Cavalry Division, located in a brewery standing in the shadow of the high moat wall. The trenches lay, roughly, three miles beyond the city walls to the eastward. The junction of the British left with the French right was south of the Menin Road, in front of Zillebeke. The trenches we were to occupy ran east and west and faced south.

Detachments of sturdy French infantry marched past, their uniforms faded to a pale blue. With swinging step, each individual marched to his own time. I admired their fit and willing appearance. They were campaign-worn as to kit and clothing, but campaign-hardened, rather than worn, as to themselves.

A constant stream of people came and went. How long would the civilian population of

Ypres remain to pay its toll of dead whenever the Germans decided further to shell the town ?

Three women passed, two of them bearing month-old babies in their arms. Noting my interested glance they smiled and waved as they trudged on. What a place for a baby !

An old bent crone, crowned with a richly beaded bonnet of ancient type, in odd incongruity to the ragged condition and mean original state of the remainder of her apparel, hobbled along, pausing now and again to pick up and store safely in her apron small pieces of coal that had been dropped from a passing wagon.

More French soldiers passed. Then a couple of British officers rode by in the picturesque uniform of some Scotch regiment of the line. A transport wagon rumbled by, and behind it came a young girl, with a bucket of water on her head, smilingly exchanging banter with a soldier of the British military police, at the corner of the street.

It was a quiet Spring afternoon, a bit overcast. Hardly to be called lowering, and yet of a stillness that seemed ominous. A day to fit all the mixture of folk going stolidly, carelessly,

gaily, or how they would, about their daily tasks.

No one seemed to realise that they were in Ypres—the Ypres which had so often been shattered by shell that the poor old town could hardly be surprised by any sort of new shell-caprice. No one saw the rent walls and gaping holes in every other building. I wondered if they could hear the guns! I could do so. They were hard at it every moment, all the time, from two to three miles distant. It was the old story of familiarity breeding contempt; or perhaps they were true philosophers, these Ypres folk.

General de Lisle ran to Potijze, to the head-quarters of General Lefebvre, who commanded the French 18th Division. It seemed ages since I had been in Potijze. Our headquarters were not far beyond it in November, 1914, during the great first battle of Ypres.

On the way from Ypres along the Zonnebeke road we passed bunches of odd little French horse transport wagons. The road was very bad. We progressed in crawfish fashion, most of the way. The *pavé* was torn terribly by shell-fire, and there was sufficient mud and

slime on it to make it extremely slippery. French soldiers were billeted in the dwellings along the road. At the edge of Potijze a dozen young boys and girls stood outside a house.

Returning to General Gough's headquarters we "took them over," as that night we were to relieve the 2nd Cavalry Division troopers in the trench line.

General de Lisle and Colonel Home ran up the Menin Road a kilometre or so, and, leaving the car, walked across the fields past the ruins that will always bear the name of "Cavan's House."

The General told me to put the car in the shelter of a house on the south side of the road, as shell-fire and the Menin Road were never strangers for long. I settled down to wait until the General had concluded his rounds of the prospective positions.

The Ypres Menin Road will be remembered oh! so long, and oh! so well. It saw rough times.

Field guns near by started to work, and now and then German shells dropped in a field beyond.

The house behind which I was sheltered, in

case of a stray shell, was a one-storey affair of modest mien.

Those of its windows which were not shattered were shuttered. Half of the roof had been shorn of its tiles. A shell had wrecked the interior of one end of the building. A glance out of a rear door-way showed a whole collection of shell-holes in the yard a few feet distant.

A door that still remained in position bore four lines of legend:

"Vin a vingt
Sous la Bouteille.
Confiture, allumettes.
Bougies, chocolate."

Glancing through one of the remaining panes of a window by the door, I saw a glass jar containing a couple of sticks of chocolate, beside it three jars of jelly, a box of French matches, a blue paper packet of half a dozen candles, a score of small oranges in one box, and in another, alongside it, seven or eight very dry-looking kippers. Peering through the partly-obscured glass one could see a stolid-looking, red-faced, albino-haired woman.

"Business as usual," with a vengeance! Such an odd curiosity shop as this was not to be

passed without examination, so I entered and talked to the woman.

Her whole stock-in-trade was what I had seen through the window. She was cheerful enough, though she huddled for warmth over a fire by which sat a despondent-looking brother. She chatted laconically about the situation, and told me she had been there continuously throughout the fighting. The shell that hit the building was a shrapnel and came a month before. Shells still came near, now and again, but that fact seemed to be accepted by her as inevitable and not to be worried about. These people had no means of existence except the sale of their pitiable bits of provisions. They were in daily danger of their lives. Yet they stayed on—odd folk. Typical Belgians.

The gun-fire dropped, then began again spasmodically. I could hear the snipers at work. In the gathering twilight the rattle of rifle fire and the storm of the rapid-fire guns sounded clearly on the left. A fusillade on the right reminded me that the Ypres position was a salient. Directly in front, down that Menin Road, which had seen the taking of so many

tens of thousands of lives during the past months, a roll of rifle fire made waves of sound.

Night fell, cold and damp. The making of a light was not permitted; so I waited in the dark, watching the night lights rise and fall over the trenches, until the General and Colonel Home returned, when we ran back to Ypres for dinner.

My first four days in Ypres were uneventful. On the fifth, I went up into the trenches, and saw more of actual trench conditions than I had seen for some time.

Our daily round led me out on the Menin Road, well towards Hooge, or to Potijze on the Zonnebeke Road, several times each day. Shells went over us now and again. Rarely did a day pass when the Huns did not bombard the railway station in Ypres. As we were quartered in the eastern edge of the town the shells aimed at the station bothered us but little. Sometimes a Black Maria lit on the moat wall, where we walked at times, but we timed our exercise so that our promenade and the arrival of the big shells never coincided. Once or twice bits of shell fell over the

Headquarters buildings, or rattled down on our paved courtyard, but rarely.

Every morning saw Ypres wrapped in a snow mantle, which was turned before noontide, to a coverlet of black mud. No fires were allowed, except small wood blazes in the open, as smoke from a chimney would have invited a shell.

One day I was searching for a shop where bolts could, once upon a time, be purchased. As I was going down the Rue de Lille, half a dozen shells fell near. One demolished a house but fifty yards ahead. I took shelter in a doorway, and as I did so a Belgian of woe-begone appearance, his most characteristic feature a pair of sad, drooping, yellow moustachios, ambled past me down the roadway, pushing a wheelbarrow. On it were three tiny tots, all under four years old. They cuddled together for warmth. One, round-eyed, at the crash of the howitzer shells, was hard at work with a nursing bottle. I warned the Belgian of impending danger, but he stolidly trudged on. Luckily, no more shells came for a time.

The Menin Road proper was never healthy.

I spent as little time on it as consistent with the proper performance of my work. I never sat for an hour in its vicinity, waiting for the General, that some shell did not fall near it.

One afternoon shrapnel fell for an hour near a fork on the Menin Road, which all sensible men gave a wide berth to when convenient. Fifteen minutes after the bombardment died down, a procession filed by the fork, headed for a graveyard in the direction of Hooge. A white-robed boy, with red-tasselled black cap, led the way, bearing a cross. Behind him came a robed priest, then an ancient, dilapidated, one-horse hearse containing a rude, black coffin. A score of mourners, one or two of them men, the rest women and children, dressed in their poor best, brought up the rear.

I wondered that they ventured down that shell-swept highway. Yet many such pathetic little processions passed along that road in those days.

I saw one *cortège* wait for a cessation of the shelling, then proceed slowly over the ground that had but a few minutes before been peppered with bits of shell. It was an odd sight. A

tiny lad trotted in front under a large wooden cross painted purple. A quartette of little boys behind him bore a rude unpainted sort of stretcher, apparently improvised from the nearest bits of shattered timber to hand. The coffin, resting upon this frame, was covered with a dingy white sheet. A mother, bowed and feeble, followed the coffin. A few youths and a handful of little girls formed the straggling *cortège*, tramping over the snow-covered cobbles, their eyes downcast and red.

Death was no stranger in Ypres in those days, but still the Belgians stayed on.

The wall of a ruined building, across the road from the Cloth Hall, fell one morning with a loud crash. A column of dust arose. That many were not injured was surprising. One woman was killed and a couple of passing French soldiers hurt, but post-card vendors were exhibiting their wares under an adjacent wall, equally dangerous, an hour later.

General de Lisle went personally over the whole of the line held by his Division. The 1st Cavalry Brigade was in the front trenches for the first five days, the 2nd Brigade in reserve. Then the 2nd Brigade took over the

trenches and the 1st Brigade came back, for the second five days, to the dug-outs.

At points in the line the trenches were knee-deep and sometimes even waist-deep with cold mud and water. The amount of manual labour required to get them into better shape was enormous. New trenches had to be dug, the old parapets strengthened, the trenches drained, and all the while certain mining work must be pushed on at a rapid rate. In some parts of the line the parapets of sandbags had become so thin that a Mauser bullet could plough through them easily. The German snipers were at one place only thirty yards distant.

The drainage of the worst bits of trench, and the laying of a sort of corduroy road from point to point, soon made the trenches much more habitable.

De Lisle was most thorough. Only a couple of casualties occurred when the 1st Brigade "took over," in spite of the constant sniping. Careful preparations of foot baths and relays of dry socks saved the Division from the epidemic of "foot-casualties," from which some other divisions had suffered heavily. A dozen

casualties per day were inevitable from shells and snipers. Those who had to "go up" with food and ammunition had to cross a dangerous zone, a certain toll being taken day and night, in some localities.

Inspecting the trench-line, when the Division had occupied it but the night before, was a precarious business. De Lisle and General Briggs were going over the ground when a German sniper but fifteen to twenty yards distant opened fire. Lieutenant Bell-Irving, General Briggs' A.D.C., received a nasty wound in the hip. He fell in the deep mud. Colonel "Tommy" Pitman, of the 11th Hussars, jumped out into the centre of the trench, and strove to lift Bell-Irving clear, and get him behind the protection of a transept. The bullets flew about the Colonel, two cutting clean through his clothing, one on either side of his body, but he escaped unhurt, and pulled Bell-Irving into safety.

But the trouble was by no means over. A sharp fire was kept up by the Hun snipers, which prevented the removal of Bell-Irving to the dressing station. Captain Moriarty of the R.A.M.C. came up at considerable risk, and

The Grande Place at Ypres and the Cloth Hall, March, 1915

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The choir of the ruined Ypres Cathedral

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advised that the wounded officer be brought back at the earliest possible moment.

There were no means of doing this save to construct a traverse of sandbags, behind which Bell-Irving could be carried. The work must be done under the heavy sniping fire. The troopers of the 11th Hussars at once set about the work with a will, and soon accomplished it, but not before a private had been killed and a sergeant wounded by the German marksmen.

That night a bombing party "cleared out" the district near that transept, and made the snipers' point of vantage untenable.

Each night a splendid pyrotechnic display showed the curved outlines of the Salient. The German trench lights were far superior to ours. Each night, too, Ypres was full of French or British lines of soldiers marching on in the dark to relieve some of their fellows in the trenches outside the town.

The ruins of the Cloth Hall, and of the St. Martin Cathedral by it, formed interesting studies for my camera. The fine mural paintings on the walls of the roofless Grand Gallery in the Cloth Hall were crumbling to bits. My

photographs were the last records made of them, for they fell piece by piece not long afterward.

I watched operations at a French Divisional Headquarters one evening. It was not more than a mile back of the line. Wagons were loading, preparatory to being taken trenchwards at dusk. Timber, thousands on thousands of empty bags, rolls of barbed wire, odd shaped completed wire entanglements, metal shields varying from curved sheet-steel bastions a dozen feet in length to small V-shaped iron castings, all manner of wooden troughs, boxes, stands, supports, periscopes, braziers, rolls of fine wire, boxes of trench bombs and grenades, shovels, picks, and many peculiar tools were among the collection of material that was to find its way to the firing line. I learnt much of the business side of trench warfare that night.

The supply of ammunition and food and its distribution are most methodically managed by the French.

Taking up giant powder for mining operation was an item of the day's work. A story was told by one of our sappers, of a couple of Irish troopers who had started across the fields

in front of Zillebeke as night was falling, with a good sized load of powder in a box. Shortly after they left Cavan's House shells fell in profusion over the route that they had chosen. Another group started trenchward, carrying various types of grenades. Howitzer shells were falling, front and rear, and shrapnel bursting a few hundred yards away.

A flash and a crash came from in front.

"Them fellers with the joynt powder was like to be in that shindy," said a member of the second party. "Close to 'em, it was, sure."

A moment later they came upon a strange sight. There in the field, just visible in the gathering darkness, sat the box. Behind it reclined the two troopers, snuggling close for cover.

"What are you doin' in this 'ere peaceful spot, Dan?" questioned one of the second party as they reached the box.

"Takin' cover the whiles we do a bit of a rest-like," was the reply. "The divils sent wan so clost, it shure jarred the wind out av us, it did."

And they snuggled closer to the giant powder as he spoke.

Hour by hour I watched the "75's." Their marksmanship was wonderful. The rapidity with which the guns were served was an eye-opener. The French gunners burst shrapnel practically over the heads of our men in the front trenches, to cover the area twenty-five yards beyond them. One trooper swore a French shell, aimed to worry sapping operations by the Huns a short distance in front of our trenches, came so close that it knocked the top sandbag off our parapet. Certain it was that the word was frequently passed to "lie low while the '75's' fire just above us."

My day to go up to the trenches came at last. My guide was Captain Bretherton, the Staff Captain of the 1st Cavalry Brigade.

Leaving my car at the "Halte," a point where the railway crosses the Menin Road, and the Zillebeke Road branches off to the south, we were soon slipping, sliding and ploughing along through the muddy fields. We followed no particular pathway, avoiding where possible fields where enemy shells were falling. The rotting mangel-wurzels dotted the ground all about us. Shell-holes in thousands, positions where French or British batteries had made a

Scenes of battle of olden time in colours on the shattered walls of Ypres Cloth Hall

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A communication trench leading to the front-line position in the Sanctuary Wood

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stand, trenches in lines and circles, and barbed wire entanglements, caught my attention at every step. Sprinkled everywhere were all manner of pieces of projectile—from complete 6-inch German shells, unexploded, to blue shrapnel cartridges, bright-nosed timing fuses, and jagged bits of all shapes and sizes.

Cavan's House was but a wall, a pile of shapeless bricks and mortar beside it. Cavan's Dug-out, a series of holes in the road bank, roofed with sandbags, held a signal party. Every day a storm of shell visited the spot, and Hun snipers made one wary thereabouts.

We walked on, up the roadway, our objective the Sanctuary Wood. The bullets sang over us, and shells burst in front with a continuous din. A path led through the scrub. Entering the wood, we passed innumerable little individual funk holes. The trees were in splinters and tatters. Here I saw an abandoned shirt, there a khaki cap. My foot hit against a regulation mess tin, and as it turned I saw a rifle-hole drilled in its bottom. Now we were ankle, now knee, deep in sticky mud. Bullets became more plentiful overhead.

A turn down a muddy path led us through

a last piece of woods, across sloughs of slime, over a creek, up a slight slope, and there we were at General Briggs's Brigade Headquarters. These were a line of dug-outs in the hillside, a corduroy road winding from entrance to entrance. A deep approach trench, looking like a drain, led one hundred and fifty yards further to the front trenches.

Shells fell all the afternoon on our right and behind us, and the song of the Mauser bullets never ceased. At dusk, I was "safe" back in Ypres.

On my way back through the woods, shell-smashed, that covered the gentle hills through which the front line trenches ran, I saw a burial party.

I stopped a moment, and watched the laying to rest of all that was mortal of three troopers who had paid the great price.

Their comrades placed them reverently in the shallow graves in the soft earth of the hill-side, marking each grave with a white wooden cross bearing each hero's name, his rank, and regiment.

Oh, those rows of rude wooden crosses! What thoughts their memory brings to mind!

Gone now, many of them, ploughed under by long months of shell-fire, or trampled under foot by the ebb and flow of battle, as the lines have swept back and forth with the tide of war. Gone, perhaps, from the scarred and mangled hill-sides of Flanders; but never to go altogether from the hearts of those who knew them, and who realised their worth.

CHAPTER III.

ON March 1st Captain "Babe" Nicholson, of the 15th Hussars, who had joined General de Lisle's staff in place of Captain Cecil Howard, 16th Lancers, promoted to General Allenby's staff at Cavalry Corps Headquarters, had to make a careful map of our trench position.

Captain Bennie Wheeler, 15th Hussars, in temporary charge of Divisional Signals, also had duties that took him to the trench line.

As neither Captain Nicholson nor Captain Wheeler had made the two-mile tramp across the fields and through the woods, I was instructed to act as guide. To skirt one edge of a field was safety of a comparative sort. To walk along its opposite edge meant dodging snipers' bullets in plenty. To turn from the road to a path through the scrub kept one out of sight of the Huns, while to proceed a dozen yards beyond the turning would expose one to a fair chance of being shot, at good range, by crack German marksmen.

Leaving our car at the Halte on the Menin Road, we essayed the route past Cavan's House that I had travelled a couple of days before with Bretherton.

Bang! bang! bang! bang! went a quartette of shrapnel just ahead.

"I don't think much of your route," said Nicholson.

"I'll change it with alacrity," said I. "Which way shall we go?"

"I know an old route that we followed in the days of the fighting last autumn," Wheeler volunteered. "If we push down the Menin Road to a point near Hooge, and then turn off, we can't get *far* wrong."

"Lot of French were hit in Hooge yesterday," I reminded him. "The Huns shell it two or three times every day, so best not go too close to it."

We tramped down to the foot of the hill that led up to the ruins of what was once Hooge, then passed through a demolished farm. For a hundred yards, at every step, we sank knee-deep in the foul, slimy mud.

Then we wound over trenches which were nearly inundated, and through barbed wire

entanglements that seemed to become more impassable as they lost their original form, until at last, covered in perspiration, we reached a dense wood.

A tiny creek ran deep through a sharp cutting, in the sheer banks of which the French gunners had burrowed like rabbits. Battery on battery of "75's" were hidden in the forest. Each gun was surrounded by a little hut of mud and leaves, an aperture left for each slim, blue-grey muzzle. We passed the first of these batteries without seeing it. Close behind us it opened fire, causing me to jump as if I had been shot. Before we left the wood, three other batteries went into action about us. The din was terrific, but the sound of the shells racing overhead was most fascinating. Each gun crew had cleared a neat line of fire in the tree-tops in front of its position.

Over further fields and through another wood we came upon a most picturesque cantonment. A French Infantry Brigade in reserve had built hundreds of mud huts and dug-outs with charming ingenuity. Dozens of veteran architects, past masters of rude shelter construction, vied with each other in improving on previous

designs. As I took a snapshot in the dull light under the trees, the French soldiers crowded forward in twos and threes, and smilingly invited me to photograph their *maisons de luxe.*

Cavan's House, our landmark, we left well on our right, edging from it the more as we saw it a very storm centre of fours and eights of shrapnel that morning.

Snipers' bullets sang merrily above as we reached the reserve line and Brigade Headquarters. My work as guide finished, I started back with General de Lisle, who, having come up early in the morning, had left his horse in the wood which sheltered the French reserves.

Mounting, the General pointed out a new route for my return, shorter than the one by which I had come.

"Keep that rise of ground between you and the line of high ground beyond," said de Lisle. "If you don't, the Germans will see you and pot at you."

Crossing my first field, I seemed to be well in the line of spent bullets, as several kicked up the dirt in the front of me sufficiently close to make me imagine myself the target.

I lost little time for the first few hundred yards.

A maze of reserve trenches and wire pulled me up short. The only path through was a quagmire. Safe beyond at last, I started collecting German timing fuses, which lay thick on the surface of the muddy field.

Not far on my left was a ruined farm. The sun came out amid the swiftly-moving clouds. "A splendid example of what shells can do to a group of buildings," I thought. "I must get a picture of the piles of *débris*."

I circled the smashed houses, took my picture, replaced my camera in its case, and turned to look sunward, as the clouds had cast a dull shadow all about me. An open bit of blue was racing toward the spot where the sun was hidden. Should I wait for it and essay a further snapshot?

As my eyes sought the sun, a bright flash in front of me, in my very line of sight, almost blinded me. A deafening explosion and the whirr of scores of shrapnel bullets was followed by another flash. Crash! The second shell seemed nearer than the first.

The pluck! pluck! pluck! flop! of bits of

projectile striking in the soft mud all about me came from every side. Little spurts of mud and water were thrown up close around me. I imagined I could feel the breath of passing shrapnel bullets. A bit of stick hit me in the face, and a gob of black mud landed squarely over my mouth.

So many mud-spurts threw up in front of me, on my right, and on my left, it seemed to me impossible I had escaped being hit.

I must have been in the very vortex of the shell's storm-centre.

Turning, thanking God I had so miraculously escaped when death had seemed so near, I dashed off as fast as I could run, heading blindly for the general direction of the Menin Road.

Fear lent wings to my feet as I realised I had, in my interest in my photography, advanced into plain sight of the line of heights of which General de Lisle had warned me.

I had not run a dozen steps when I thought of my heavy load, in pockets and hands, of shell heads. I tossed them away as I leaped on, tempted for a moment to hurl my camera after them.

Bang! Crash! Behind me came a second pair of shells, whose coming I had dreaded every second. To my delight, but one or two bullets came my way.

"I am gaining," I thought.

Bang! bang! another two burst overhead, throwing their deadly contents beyond me in the direction in which I was running.

I ducked to the right and ran diagonally to the Hun line of fire. Panting, I struck a deep bog. In I went before I realised it lay in my path. In a twinkling I was in a pretty mess. My feet sank deep in the slime and ooze. It took great effort to raise them. Well over my knees in mud, I felt trapped, but struggled on.

At last I trod on firmer bottom, and soon was racing away at much better speed.

Crash! Bang! I could see over my shoulder that the last two arrivals had burst over the muck through which I had just floundered, throwing spurts of liquid mud high in the air.

The Hun gunners were gradually increasing their range, though I was well out of sight of them.

My breath came in great sobs, but I dared not slacken.

Bang! Bang! Two fell behind me again, but not so near. That encouraged my flagging footsteps, and I jog-trotted on, until at last the Menin Road was before me. Reaching it, I laid down, utterly exhausted. The shells continued to burst nearer and nearer the road, and came in fours after the first half-dozen couples, twenty-four shrapnel having been fired in all.

Two British gunners, attached to a siege battery near by, hurried past me as I lay recuperating.

"Bad place to be, this," said one of them. "They shell this bit of road every day about this time. Those two holes were made yesterday"—pointing to two cavities not ten feet from me.

So I pulled myself to my feet and pushed on for "home," arriving safely enough, though completely tired out and literally plastered with mud.

As I was resting at Headquarters, one of the Staff told me I had "missed some fun" while "out front." Six Black Marias had landed on

the earthen wall of the moat, not many yards from our brewery quarters, "shaking things up a bit," but fortunately hitting no one.

Examining my camera, I discovered, to my great chagrin, that the shutter had been inadvertently set at "time" when I took the snapshot of the ruined farm, away from which I retired in such a hurry. So I missed getting the picture which cost me such a strenuous race against the shells. As a solace, my photographs of the French reserves in the wood, and of our Brigade Headquarters, came out quite satisfactorily.

Shells fell not far from our Divisional Headquarters next day. More than once the signalsmen brought in pieces of shrapnel, quite hot, that fell in the courtyard, which from that time began to lose its popularity as a lounging-place for waiting orderlies.

A run to Hooge, and a wait there in a dug-out while the Huns threw a dozen shells about it, was made memorable to me by Nicholson's reconstruction of a bit of the fighting over that ground in November, 1914.

Nicholson had been with the 1st Infantry Division—a Division that had Haig for a leader.

At the beginning of the War it had come out 14,000 odd strong. In six months its total list of casualties had reached 34,000.

In the first battle of Ypres its battalions had suffered cruelly. The 1st Coldstreams had been annihilated. The Queen's (West Surreys) came out of the line with but fifteen men and no officers, the Black Watch with but sixty men and one officer, and the Loyal North Lancashires with but 150 men and two officers. When the Division came back to billets, it was commanded by a brigadier-general. Every colonel in the division had been killed or wounded, and the brigades were commanded by officers of all ranks. A captain was in command of one brigade.

It was in front of Hooge, between that town and Gheluvelt, that most of the heaviest losses of the 1st Division were suffered.

Nicholson had seen some of it. One night the Prussian Guard broke through the line on the Menin Road. Nicholson's squadron of the 15th Hussars, acting as Divisional Cavalry, were sent to stop the gap. Forty troopers and forty cyclists, eighty rifles all told, went up. They had no trenches, as the Prussians held

our original position. So they lay in a sunken road near the Herenthage Château. The Germans occupied a wood sixty yards away, though neither force knew of the whereabouts of the other until dawn.

Nicholson sought out General Fitzclarence, commanding the 1st Brigade, in the dark. Most of Fitzclarence's Brigade had been killed. Efforts to clear up the situation had borne little result. Every messenger he had sent out for information had been killed. Fitzclarence said five brigades were to be sent to him, with which he was to counter-attack. The five brigades came, and were found to total 1,000 men all told. Yet with the remnants of his force Fitzclarence counter-attacked at dawn. Though he himself was killed, his wonderful men won through. The position was recaptured, and Ypres saved.

A glorious page in the annals of the British Army, though it cost England men who were indeed hard to replace.

Our 1st Cavalry Division had come into the line that night, and supplied the reinforcements without which the exhausted troops could not have held on much longer.

Consequently the ground over which those heroic battles had been fought was of fascinating interest to those of us who had seen the most strenuous struggle of the War.

"As to the losses of the enemy," Nicholson told me, "I once scouted the wood in front of us. It was a terrible sight. In many places among the trees I could not set my foot without stepping on a dead German."

But the work of Haig and his super-men had been crowned with success. We had held the Ypres Salient, and were still holding it —a glorious record.

On the morning of March 3rd Nicholson found it necessary to go once more over the line of our front trenches to verify his map. I was to go with him.

Rain fell all morning, and we splashed over the cross-country route to Brigade Headquarters and the reserve line without incident, bar snipers and itinerant shells, most of which sang over our heads on their way toward Ypres.

One portion of the approach trench leading to the firing-line was so narrow that "Jeff" Hornby, of the 9th Lancers, A.D.C. to General Mullens, waded through it at my heels, "to

see the President (my sobriquet) get stuck fast."

In spite of the rain, I procured a sufficient number of photographs to show trench life as no written description could picture it.

The top of the hill was cut and seamed with trenches at all angles, some narrow, some wide. The trench walls had been in a few places reinforced with tree trunks, though, for the most part, from two to half a dozen rows of sandbags served as protection. The line was rarely straight for more than a few yards.

The troopers in the front trenches were either standing about, near machine-gun or rifle, engaged in cleaning kit or accoutrement, or sleeping in one of the tiny shelters that lined the trench sides at the rear.

The fact that there was no uniformity to the trenches as to height, width, or direction made caution necessary as we wound along them. Expediency was the law that governed their original construction, and experience the guide as to their alteration and development.

Loop-holes covered with bits of sacking were marked by pieces of paper pinned above,

Officers of Lancers in their dug-outs in the front-line trenches

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A dug-out in front of Zillebeke

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warning occupants not to tarry in the line of German fire.

By periscope we could see the Hun trenches, not many yards distant, and dozens of dead Germans lying between the two lines. The smoke from the enemy's cooking fires rose slowly in the damp atmosphere. At corners, cautions to "keep down" were posted. Snipers' bullets, heralded by a sharp bark and twanging musically, kept me down without much warning.

A German sniper's position was pointed out to me, and I had some good rifle practice endeavouring to dislodge him, but with questionable success. The Hun riflemen had learned to lie very low in front of our troopers.

We passed one of the 4th Dragoon Guards' marksmen, his eye along the barrel of his rifle as it lay in a loop-hole. As we came up he fired.

"Got him?" asked Nicholson.

"No," laconically answered the sharpshooter. "Got one this morning, though, sir. And I hope we are not shifted out of this for a day or so, as there are a couple more of the beggars I'll get if I'm given a bit of time."

Seeing a trooper of the 9th Lancers whom

I had known since the Great Retreat, I asked him how much longer his squadron was booked to be in the front trench.

"Only twenty-four hours or so," was the reply. "But we could stick this sort of thing for a week and not kick. They're behavin' themselves much better as they go on," and he grinned as he nodded his head at the German trench. "They're learnin'."

Now and then an enemy marksman sent a bullet through a loophole in front of us or behind us as we proceeded down the line, until we learned to pass these danger spots without loitering.

Once we found it necessary to double back along a shallow trench a few yards behind the main parapet. The ditch we traversed was deep with cold water, which ran over the tops of my high boots.

The damage to the trees was so extensive that shells might be said to have literally cleared away the forest in some localities.

In spite of water in the trenches, the men were cheerily comfortable, many of them gathering around glowing brasiers or cuddling close to the wall of a cosy dug-out.

An enforced detour nearly landed us in an impasse. We had taken the wrong turning. The trench parapet became lower, the trench narrower, and the cold water deeper. Pressed for time, we pushed on. At last Nicholson, who was leading, saw an angle of front line trench ahead, and ran for it. I followed. Bullets sang overhead as the Huns got a glimpse of us, but we ducked low and splashed through for dear life in record time.

Nicholson became so interested in a view through a periscope that I took a picture of him while thus engaged. A genial acquaintance in the line offered to get a similar photograph of me. So I took the periscope, waving it slightly back and forth, and carefully inspecting the German trench forty yards distant. I detected a movement on the enemy side of the line. Steadying my periscope, I focussed my attention on the moving object.

As I did so, "Ping! smash!" came a bullet right through the top of my periscope.

"A clean bull," said Nicholson, beside me. "Are you hit?"

I had been about to call his attention, when the sniper scored, with the result that

a shower of broken glass fell into my open mouth.

I was in great fear of swallowing some of it. Nicholson, seeing me dance about and spying a fleck of blood on my lip, thought I had been hit in the mouth by a glancing bullet.

He proffered help, I prancing about, gesticulating that I was all right, spitting out glass, but afraid to speak until I had cleared the last piece of broken mirror. The Captain entirely misunderstood my dumb show, and we caused some merriment among the troopers near by until I managed to eject the final bit and could explain that I was not in the least hurt.

When I learned that one officer had suffered a badly cut eyeball, threatening the loss of his sight, and another had been seriously wounded in the jaw and neck by just such an incident as the one I had experienced, I was thankful to have escaped injury.

The "trench stoop" was astonishingly fatiguing. Covered from head to foot with yellow sticky mud, and very tired, we started to walk to the Menin Road. The snipers were more alert than usual, and more than one close call kept me from thinking of my weariness.

Before we reached our car the German batteries shelled madly at the very point we were to pass, but considerately stopped firing by the time we approached the spot where the shells were falling.

One morning "Mouse" Tomkinson and Hardress Lloyd had walked down to Zillebeke, where folk rarely went in the daytime, to inspect some of the graves in the Zillebeke churchyard. Hardress Lloyd's brother-in-law, Colonel Wilson, of the Blues, was buried there.

I promised Captain Lloyd that if I could get off to do so, I would go down to Zillebeke and take a photograph of Colonel Wilson's grave.

Hearing of my projected trip, Lord Loch, who was at that time G.S.O.1, on the staff of General Bulfin, commanding 28th Division, asked "Babe" Nicholson to obtain for him, if possible, a picture of the grave of Lieutenant Gordon-Lennox, which is also in Zillebeke.

Hardress Lloyd and Tomkinson told us they had been seen in the churchyard by the German artillery observers, who had commenced shelling. I was warned, therefore, that any

photography I wished to do in that locality must needs be done quickly.

On March 4th Nicholson and I set out to obtain the desired pictures. I stopped on the way, at a cemetery on the Menin Road, and took a photograph of the graves of three officers of the 10th Hussars—Captain Annesley, Lieutenant Drake, and Captain Peto—who had fallen in the first battle of Ypres.

Zillebeke was lonely. On one edge of it a couple of signal corps men were laying a wire. Otherwise the town, which was in ruins, was deserted.

We kept under cover of the houses as much as possible. I obtained a good snapshot of the damaged church, and then took some pictures in the graveyard, which was torn with great shell-holes.

"Remember what Hardress said about the Huns being able to see us here," I said to Nicholson. "Let's get out of it."

We started. No sooner were we under cover of the first cluster of smashed houses than four shrapnel shells burst right over the *pavé* roadway, not fifty yards ahead of us.

I dodged into a house, the walls of which,

The Zillebeke Church, March, 1915

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German prisoners in Ypres, captured after the explosion of a British mine near Hooge

see p. 100

minus roof, were still standing at drunken angles. Doorless and windowless, the house seemed to offer little protection.

"I don't like going up that road over the hill," said I. "We will be in sight of the Huns for some distance. I wonder if this house boasts a cellar?"

Examination showed a cellar existed, but it was nearly full of water.

"I guess the cellar steps provide the best roosting-place," was my conclusion. "Me for the lowest one for a bit. Won't you share it with me?"

"I don't like it," replied Nicholson. "We will be much better out of it. Let's go."

We argued the various possibilities, but Nicholson was so strongly in favour of departure that I acquiesced, and we started away.

We had gone about one hundred feet when a series of crashes close behind us quickened my pace. Nicholson turned and looked. I called to him, and he again came on.

As he came up he said: "Did you see where that lot landed?" "No," I answered. "Too close to suit me, but just where I didn't notice."

"It interested me," said he, as we pushed on, "because all four of those shells exploded in that rickety old house in which you were so keen on taking cover. But little would be left of us by now had we stayed, for the poor building collapsed like a house of cards."

The Germans shelled the road vigorously as we kept on, but luckily the shrapnel fell behind us, and we were soon back in Ypres.

That day saw the German gunners increase their shelling all along the Ypres front. The trenches occupied by our division were vigorously bombarded, and several casualties reported. Ypres itself came in for a heavy share of the Hun "hate." The windows rattled and our house shivered as the howitzer shells smashed into all quarters of the town.

De Lisle visited the trench line, and both there and on his way back across the fields the shells fell very close to him. As he entered the headquarters house on his return, he said: "From what I can see, most of the big ones are falling at least four or five hundred yards from us thus far, but they may shell us out of this at any time."

The General suggested I should take a stroll

with him along the moat wall and watch the trend of the bombardment. As we walked along the ramparts, the projectiles screamed overhead in dozens, seemingly coming continually closer. The rumph! r-r-r-rumph! as they exploded shook the high wall and made the whole city rock with the concussion. The Rue de Lille was rendered impassable that day.

General Plumer called, and after his departure I again started for a stroll on the ramparts. The shells searching for our batteries just across the moat were a fascinating sight. As I ran up the steep path, however, a crash came just ahead, and bits of metal showered about, striking sharply against the trees beside the path. My curiosity evaporated instantly, and I came down faster than I had gone up.

As dusk came, I took Major Fitzgerald to Hooge, from whence he went through a wood to the trenches to make the final arrangements for the explosion of a mine—the construction of which had been worked upon feverishly for some days—that all might be completed and the mine fired on that night, our last one in the trenches. The French, who were to relieve us, had also constructed a mine on our left,

and the two were to be discharged at an interval of five minutes.

First the French mine was to be fired at 7.45 p.m., and 7.50 to the tick of the watch was to be the time for the explosion of our mine, less than a hundred yards away from the French one.

I was seldom in Hooge when it was not shelled, and that evening was no exception. The French had built safe dug-outs under the buildings still left standing. The château was completely ruined, as were most of the houses in the village.

As I was being entertained by a French officer, who produced a glass of splendid red wine, some thirty shells burst over us, most of them of the 210-millimetre type. One of them knocked off a corner of the building behind which I had sheltered my car.

Never was a locality more offensive to one's olfactory nerves than Hooge. It fairly reeked with all manner of various noxious smells. The English language contains words of too mild a character to allow a description of that feature of Hooge.

The front line was less than a kilometre

distant. Rifle fire swelled and died away in long, rattling breaths. I became so accustomed to the punctuation of my conversation with shell-smashes and periods of heightened din from small arms and machine-guns that, when all would die down suddenly for an instant, the stillness felt ominously oppressive. The next spasm of sound came as a relief to the uncanny moments of twilight silence.

A French engineer officer joined us. He told us General Lefebvre, the French General in command of that section of the Salient, had issued most elaborate written instructions for the joint explosion of the two mines. The French mine, he said, had been ready for two or three days, its charge lying at the end of a tunnel but two metres from the German trench.

The hour for the discharge of the French mine came, but no sound or shock of explosion came with it. The hands of the Allied watches, carefully synchronised, crept round to 7.50, then to 7.55.

Just before eight o'clock a huge bang was heard by the British sapper who was waiting in his tunnel, ready to fire his mine.

"At last," he murmured. "Now I must count off the five minutes to the second."

A squadron of the Queen's Bays was ready to rush into the enemy's trench. Ten of them, the forward storming party, were waiting in a saphead.

One, two, three, four, and at last, *five.*

Boom!

The whole earth seemed thrown skyward. The shock was terrific. Nearly one thousand pounds of blasting powder had tossed fifty yards of German trench, not two hundred feet in front of our line, high in air.

The great smash came as a complete surprise to the Huns, but, alas! an equal surprise to French and British.

The explosion which the British sapper, in his tunnel dug-out, had mistaken for the discharge of the French mine, had been a huge German *minenwerfer*, or trench-bomb, thrown by a trench-howitzer.

The French mine, inexplicably delayed, had not been fired.

For a moment confusion reigned. Three men of the half-score Queen's Bays in the storming party were hurt. One suffered a

broken arm, and the others, hurled aside by the unexpected explosion of our own mine, were badly bruised and strained.

In an instant, however, every man in the line realised what had occurred, and the Bays went forward with a yell, occupying about fifty yards of German first-line trench and the gaping crater left by the mine.

Fortifying the captured position and installing therein a couple of machine-guns, they met the enemy's counter-attacks staunchly.

For three hours and a half they kept the ground won, but at last were bombed out. The Huns threw hundreds of grenades among them, while our poor supply of trench-bombs ran out in but a few minutes.

I chatted with the remnants of the storming party when they came back. Many gruesome tales they told. One German soldier was blown high in the air, over a fringe of trees, and found some distance back of our front line, quite 150 yards from his own trench.

A trooper noticed a movement near a pile of timber, earth, and sandbags. Peering through the dim light, he saw a hand waving about aimlessly. Grasping it, he pulled with a will.

A comrade assisted, and soon they unearthed a buried German.

The prisoner was a funny little fellow—a stocky Wurtemburger in green corduroys and a knitted helmet. When rescued, he lapsed into unconsciousness for an hour. He had been through the first battle of Ypres, he said later, in which he was the only one of his regiment to escape death or a wound. Blown high in air, very, very high, it seemed to him, he felt a great mass of *débris* fall upon him.

He told us, in a spirit of resignation to his fate, that to have lived through the October and November fighting on the Menin Road, and be thrown skyward by a mine, then buried, and still live, entitled him, he thought, to spend the rest of the War, without disgrace, in an enemy prison.

The French exploded their mine at one o'clock in the morning, and by daybreak the 1st Cavalry Division had "turned over" to them, and was on its way back from Ypres to billets in a more quiet locality.

Motor 'buses moved the men back, as they had brought the dismounted troopers up. The long lines of London 'buses, with khaki-painted

windows, rendering their interior lighting barely visible, looked odd in the black Ypres streets. No outside lights were permitted.

To hear one bell, see the dark shape of the clumsy vehicle slow down, then hear the two bells that signalled departure, next the grinding crunch of gears, and finally, to see the ghostly 'bus slide forward in the night, brought strange parodies of London memories.

General de Lisle had planned to leave Ypres at twelve noon on March 5th. We left half an hour earlier, by chance. Next day we learned that ten minutes after our departure a Black Maria struck the very building we had occupied during our ten days' stay in Ypres, blowing the back of it through its front, and generally demolishing the premises.

One day, subsequently, I visited the house to learn if so strange a coincidence of timely evacuation was true, and found that the story was correct in every detail. The interior of the place was one mass of smashed walls and partitions, the *débris* bulging from the doors and windows of the front of the building, which still remained practically intact.

The handling of the Division during its

occupation of the Ypres trenches reflected great credit on General de Lisle.

We left our trenches in much better shape than that in which we had found them. Some casualties were inevitable, but the total number of men killed was only eleven during the ten days, a low percentage when the strength of the Division, not far short of 2,500 rifles in the line, was considered.

At daybreak on the morning of March 10th the British attack was launched which was to become known to history as the battle of Neuve Chapelle.

For several days the weather had been cold, raw and damp. On some days it rained and blustered, while at night snow fell, and the wind howled unceasingly. The morning of the 9th dawned clear and cold, the stormy weather having been driven away by a hard frost. The Tommies in the trench line were treated to every vagary of the treacherous climate of Flanders in March.

My car indulged in periodical attacks of the dumps and finally became a nuisance. Accordingly I ran to Sailly, where the Canadian Divisional Headquarters were located, and

sought the Divisional Repair Park, which proved to be at Merville. On the 8th I left the car in the hands of the Canadian boys for a few days' repair. On the Canadian front I learned from an acquaintance of a projected attack of considerable magnitude, spurring me on toward getting my car in runnable shape at the earliest possible moment.

On March 9th, in Merville, I saw Sir Douglas Haig's Special Order to the First Army, issued that day, which read as follows:—

> "We are about to engage the enemy under very favourable conditions. Until now in the present campaign, the British Army has, by its pluck and determination, gained victories against an enemy greatly superior both in men and guns. Reinforcements have made us stronger than the enemy in our front. Our guns are now both more numerous than the enemy's are and also larger than any hitherto used by any army in the field. Our Flying Corps has driven the Germans from the air.
>
> "On the Eastern Front, and to the

South of us, our Allies have made marked progress and caused enormous losses to the Germans, who are, moreover, harassed by internal troubles and shortage of supplies, so that there is little prospect at present of big reinforcements being sent against us here.

"In front of us we have only one German Corps, spread out on a front as large as that occupied by the whole of our Army (the First).

"We are now about to attack with about forty-eight battalions a locality in that front which is held by some three German battalions. It seems probable, also, that for the first day of the operations the Germans will not have more than four battalions available as reinforcements for the counter-attack. Quickness of movement is therefore of first importance to enable us to forestall the enemy and thereby gain success without severe loss.

"At no time in this war has there been a more favourable moment for us, and I feel confident of success. The extent of

that success must depend on the rapidity and determination with which we advance.

"Although fighting in France, let us remember that we are fighting to preserve the British Empire and to protect our homes against the organised savagery of the Germany Army. To ensure success, each one of us must play his part, and fight like men for the honour of Old England."

In the evening when I returned to 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters I found the servants packing. My servant said on my arrival, "Your kit is ready, sir. We are to shift out of this at six o'clock in the morning. A big push is on."

The Cavalry was to "stand by," in case the infantry attack succeeded and a hole was made in the German line.

The guns began before daylight, and hundreds of them, with an amplitude of ammunition, made a pandemonium.

I begged a ride in a G.H.Q. car and found myself during the forenoon near the headquarters of General Davies of the 8th Division.

Not many days before, General de Lisle had called at Estaires, and we had been hospitably given lunch by General Davies, when we had learned something of the general topography of the line on the 8th Division front. The ground in that sector was so water-logged and soft that it did not admit of the construction of a trench line such as we had held in the Ypres Salient. Each small point of vantage to the east of Laventie —a house here, or a rise of ground there—had been made into miniature forts by the British or the Germans. A trench line proper existed, but consisted, from the nature of the terrain, of trench-works and parapets of sandbags, all above ground. These were less impregnable than a trench line in solid ground, and could much more easily be demolished by shell-fire.

The road from Estaires to La Bassée, on the morning of March 10th, was full of advancing troops and returning wounded. General Davies' headquarters were said to be at Rouge Croix, not far west of the town of Neuve Chapelle.

I did not go as far as the cross roads at

Rouge Croix, as that point was under heavy German shell-fire.

Little could I see except the enemy's shells, and still less could I learn. That the 8th Division had taken the front line German trenches was common rumour.

Finally a wounded subaltern, a mere boy, came back, hysterically cheerful in spite of a nasty wound in his arm. He belonged to the 25th Brigade—Lincolns, Dorsets, Rifle Brigade and Wiltshires.

"We took Neuve Chapelle," he said. "Many casualties? Yes, plenty. You see, we had orders to take the bally town at all costs, and we did it!"

He was sure his fellows had the ridge that commanded Aubers, and had heard that our men on the right had reached a point a couple of miles beyond La Bassée. Cheerful lad, that. Neither the Auber Ridge nor La Bassée was to be ours, but it was not for lack of his sort. He and his kind, with the men behind them that fought that day at Neuve Chapelle, could have taken Aubers and Lille beyond it had someone not blundered that 10th of March.

Weeks passed before the occurrences of that fateful day were made clear to me. Every sort of rumour was afloat. On the 10th and the 11th I was between Merville (where General Haig had his headquarters), Estaires and Laventie, but no one seemed to know in those days as to just why things had gone so badly when the promise of success had been so great.

Later I knew.

General Haig had been quite reasonably correct in his estimate of the enemy's strength. Our chance to break through the German line was the finest opportunity of the whole war.

That, with such odds in our favour, with a preponderance of guns and shells as well, we should have so signally failed, and lost over 18,000 men into the bargain, required some explanation.

The tragedy of Neuve Chapelle was a failure to take advantage of an initial success. The 25th Brigade, with the 23rd Brigade on its left, nobly did the work assigned to it. It took Neuve Chapelle itself, and reached the position it had hoped to reach. The 24th Brigade was to come up, through the 23rd and 25th Brigades,

and as it advanced, the 20th Brigade, on its left, was to move forward. Still to the left of the 20th Brigade the 21st Brigade was in readiness, and on its left the Northamptonshire Yeomanry, which had been put into the trenches previously occupied by the 20th Brigade, to free that command for the attack.

Thus, once the preliminary ground-clearing was done by the 23rd and 25th Brigades on the right, and the town of Neuve Chapelle was taken, the 24th Brigade was to come on and form the right of a line composed of itself, the 20th and 21st Brigades, which were to pivot on the Northamptonshire Yeomanry and sweep over the Auber Ridge.

On the left of the Yeomanry waited the 22nd Brigade, ready to jump forward the moment this swinging movement had developed.

The initial success won, the whole line waited, eyes on the right, for the signal to go on. Before nine o'clock in the morning all was ready, and the road cleared.

All day the watchers waited in vain.

It was after four o'clock in the afternoon before the word came.

It was then too late.

The great opportunity had been lost, and lost for ever.

The Germans had rallied, filled farms with machine-guns, and mowed down the gallant 23rd and 25th Brigades men who had so dearly won such splendidly advanced positions.

The 24th Brigade had come on part way, then concentrated, and was sadly cut up. That the line on the right had "dug-in," instead of moving forward, had resulted in a defeat when a great victory was within grasp.

And who was to blame?

A Brigade commander and the General in command of the artillery of a certain division were promptly "Stellenbosched." A divisional commander was reported sent home; his case reopened when he declared the fault was not his, as could be proven by certain hitherto unproduced papers from corps headquarters. A further inquiry resulted in his being re-instated. His corps commander went to England. "Sent home," said many. Shortly afterwards, back he came, to the discomfiture of the prophets, and took up his old command.

Who was to blame?

It is too early to tell. Let the writers of the

future dig the story out of the tangled orders of the day, as between corps and division, division and brigade.

No battle of such magnitude could be won without fine Staff work, and the work of more than one staff on that 10th of March left much to be desired.

One thing cannot be gainsaid. The men in the ranks fought like heroes. Nothing that men could do was left undone by them.

One officer who saw as much of Neuve Chapelle, and knew as much of the tragedy as any one man said to me: "The word 'concentrate' caused all the trouble. The troops that might so easily have come on had orders to concentrate along a certain road. That was the root of the mix-up. They concentrated, dug-in, and waited for orders, in accordance with their instructions. Those instructions did not come until half past four in the afternoon. The whole day had been wasted. The time had flown, and the great opportunity with it."

The cavalry would have had a fine part to play had all gone well.

The 2nd Cavalry Division was drawn up back of Estaires, the 3rd Cavalry Division in

the Forest of Nieppe, and the 1st Cavalry Division was ready at its billets. A hole in the German line meant a strong push through by the three cavalry divisions.

On the right of the 7th and 8th Divisions the Indian Corps had hard fighting, the day of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. The Gurkhas, one of their officers told me, took a wood, lost it, took it a second time, lost it again, and a third time took it, only to be driven out at last owing to the fact that no support was available.

On a visit to Bethune one day I heard dozens of stories of the fierce fighting on March 10th, on the 2nd Division front, where one Brigade lost twenty-five officers and seven hundred men in an abortive attack.

But the interest centred around the 8th Division fighting, that began so well, then hung fire until the Germans recovered from the demoralization of the smashing blow.

How utter was that demoralization we learned later from "agents" near Lille and Tournai. The Germans were actually "on the run" that morning, and pressing forward would have indubitably borne results that would have loomed large in the trend of events.

On March 15th, the 1st Cavalry Division was called out at dawn, and placed in support of the 27th Division at St. Eloi. Just before six o'clock on the evening of the 14th, the Huns had fired a mine at St. Eloi, and then poured a rain of high explosive shells over our trenches for half an hour. The howitzer shells exploded so rapidly, that one continuous roar ensued, the separate detonations being with difficulty distinguished.

The moment the German guns stopped their fusilade, the German infantry rushed forward, the attack developing all along the 5th Corps front. St. Eloi itself, the southern re-entrant of the Ypres Salient, was soon in enemy hands.

By two o'clock on the morning of the 15th, a British counter-attack was launched. By daybreak each force held some part of St. Eloi, and the fighting grew fierce and fiercer. By night all the town was in British hands save one point, a mound which had been transformed into a kind of fort by the enemy.

During that fighting, the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade was sent up to take a section of trench out of which one of the other 27th Division Battalions had been shelled. Once before,

within the hour, another battalion had essayed to recapture the lost position, and had "retired" in considerable confusion.

The Rifle Brigade set its teeth and started for the hottest part of the fray.

"You must cross that road," its commander was told, "though Heaven only knows how anyone can get across it alive."

Sixteen Hun machine-guns were playing on the open space over which the battalion must pass.

Over it they went. In less than sixty seconds eleven officers and two hundred and fifty men were down, but the rest pushed on.

They reached the trench, some of them, cleared out the Huns with the cold steel, and consolidated the position — a splendid performance.

The 5th Corps made good the ground the Germans had won without calling on the 1st Cavalry Division troops for assistance, and thus ended the last chance of our Division for active fighting during the month of March.

Inspections in the Flemish mud, bright sunshine and spring zephyrs one day, and snow the next, and more than once snow and

sunshine alternating throughout the span of a day, marked the passing of the month.

Paris, Calais, St. Omer, Estaires, Lillers, Merville and Hazebrouck were visited by enemy airmen as the days went by, and bombs dropped, but without much damage to lives or property.

"The Huns don't care whether or not they hit anything," said one sage "sub." "They only want to show Sir Douglas Haig they have a copy of that March 10th Order of his wherein he said 'Our Flying Corps has driven the Germans from the air.'"

On March 25th I spent the morning in Bailleul at 2nd Corps and 3rd Corps Headquarters.

The Staffordshire Brigade of the North Midland Territorial Division marched past to the music of their fine brass band, drawn up in the square—the first band I had seen or heard since leaving England seven months before. Crowds of soldiers and officers flocked to hear it and see the sturdy Terriers march by with swinging step. They created a splendid impression.

The next day my work was to take General

Lowe and General Lumley over the path of the early fighting in Flanders—from Meteren through Bailleul to Armentières, thence to the line on the Ploegsteert Hill and through the Ploegsteert Wood.

We stopped in the town of Ploegsteert, where, in the churchyard, General Lumley's son, a gallant young officer in the 11th Hussars, was buried.

The boy had been killed on October 17th, when our Division was trying to force a way across the River Lys. At Le Touquet Lieutenant Lumley was reconnoitring a position preparatory to an advance when a German sniper's bullet struck him.

As the General visited his son's grave I learned from townsfolk how things had fared with them.

Months before the 1st Cavalry Division had been the first British contingent to enter Ploegsteert. The people told me of the severe shelling the town had suffered, though the shattered church and a black hole where the principal *estaminet* once stood were surrounded by many other evidences of the damage of the Hun gun-fire.

"We have been here through it all," said an old lady whose French had a heavy Flemish accent. "We go into the cellars when the bombardment begins, and when it ends we come out and go about our work. What else could we do?"

Some townsfolk had been hit, but none killed, they said. The merry baker, whose brown bread had been so greatly enjoyed by our mess, had been hit by shrapnel bullet a few weeks before and killed. His wife was running the bakery still, though in but a small way, she said, sadly.

The Bois de Ploegsteert and the line in its vicinity was much the same as when our Division had left it months before. The wood was perhaps a little more smashed, the château a bit more flattened.

Our batteries fired regularly as we walked about, their shells whirring over our heads without eliciting a single reply shot from the Huns.

Down the corduroy roads through the Ploegsteert Wood and to its trench-line, where the men were far from uncomfortable, the path seemed sufficiently familiar to have been there for years instead of months.

Next day, the 27th, my work took me still further afield. General de Lisle, with General Briggs and General Mullens and one or two members of their staffs, were to walk over the reserve line of trenches from in front of Kemmel to Dickebusch. One of General Smith-Dorrien's Staff officers was to accompany them.

Dismounting from the cars at the Station Inn, on the Neuve Eglise-Kemmel Road, the party headed for the reserve trenches. I was instructed to convoy the other cars in the party to a spot on the Ypres side of Dickebusch.

"Don't stop at the cross-roads," said Captain Walker of the 2nd Army Staff. "The Germans shell the cross-roads two or three times every day. It's best to run up the Vlamertinghe Road a couple of hundred yards and wait there. You are not so likely to be hit."

Past Dranoutre and Locre, and thence through La Clytte and Dickebusch my route led. Familiar ground of months past, every inch of it. Here and there fields had been ploughed well by shell-fire, and many once familiar buildings along the way had been shattered or destroyed. It was uncanny to find that more than one spot which I had in

former days selected as a daily stand for the car had become a great gaping hole dug by a huge howitzer shell.

Huts beside the road teemed with Tommies.

As I entered La Clytte I well remembered my last day there, in November, 1914. Major Steele, of the R.A.M.C., and Captain Baron Le Jeune, a French liaison officer, both of them popular members of the 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters Staff, had been killed in La Clytte by the same shell. Another shell had that day gone close over General de Lisle and me as we were leaving the town.

Picking my way past a clumsy farm wagon, I thought of those days of "close calls." I was thankful no shells had fallen near me *that* morning.

As I drew past the cross-road in La Clytte, however, a scream sounded over my head, and a shell burst in the field not one hundred feet beyond me.

I was off like a flash, abandoning all thought of saving my car from the rough bumping over the broken *pavé*. It seemed weird, that lone shell, so close to me in La Clytte. No more

came, or at least, if they did so, I did not hear them, and I soon passed Dickebusch.

A two hours' wait in snow and sun and snow again saw the arrival of General de Lisle, and we were promptly off for "home."

Such days were fair samples of my work until March winds had ceased to blow, and April, with its promise of an early spring, had come.

CHAPTER IV.

ON April 1st, I heard at G.H.Q. that within a few days the French 9th and 16th Corps, which were in the Ypres area, were to be moved south. The British were to take over the line from the Belgian left near Bixschoote, and make a continuous British line from that point to the left of the main French front near the La Bassée Canal. Events were to happen which prevented the completion of this plan — events due to a German initiative.

The days grew warmer, though rain fell with sufficient frequency to keep the fields deep with mud.

Rumours of a "push" could be heard everywhere. It was timed by most prophets for April 24th or 25th, though some declared it would develop by the 20th.

Many there were who scoffed at the idea of an advance. One story current at G.H.Q. told of a subaltern of an infantry battalion, which had long occupied the Ploegsteert

trenches, who paid a visit to a brother officer in another division, which had been marooned in the Kemmel trenches for what had seemed an interminable period.

"You will notice," said the Kemmel man, "my men are planting daffodils on the parapets to hide 'em. We hope to have the line quite invisible in the course of time."

"Humph," replied he of Ploegsteert, "you *are* a lot of blooming optimists. *My* men have planted acorns in front of *our* ditch."

On April 3rd, Lord Kitchener came to Boulogne by torpedo-boat. On the next morning, Sunday, he landed, came through St. Omer, where he was joined by General French, and proceeded to Chantilly, where a conference with General Joffre was held. On the following day, Lord Kitchener and General French met General Foch at Amiens. A dash to St. Omer, where Sir John remained, then a rush to Boulogne, and England's War Minister was again aboard his torpedo-boat and speeding back toward Whitehall.

As news of this visit spread over the Army, rumour piled on rumour of the new "push" that was to accomplish such great results.

True, sinister minds attributed Kitchener's visits to the large loss in men and the small gain in ground of Neuve Chapelle, but they were greatly in the minority.

We obtained a copy of the *Lille War Gazette*, a newspaper published by the German Army in Lille, which contained many items of interest. Chief among them was an article by a Hun named Kaden, a lieutenant-colonel of a line regiment. The following is a translation of this article, which caused much comment :—

FIRE.

By Lieutenant-Colonel Kaden.

As children, many of us have played with it; some of us have seen an outbreak of fire. First a small tongue-like flame appears; it grows into a devastating fury of heat. We out here in the field have seen more than enough of it.

But there is also the fire of joy—of sacred enthusiasm. It arose from sacrificial altars, from mountain heights of Germany, and lit up the heavens at the time of solstice and whenever the home countries were in danger. This year fires

of joy shall flare from the Bismarck columns throughout the length and breadth of Germany, for on April 1st, just one hundred years ago, our country's greatest son was born. Let us celebrate this event in a manner deep, far-reaching, and mighty!

Blood and Iron!

Let every German, man or woman, young or old, find in his heart a Bismarck column, a pillar of fire, now in these days of storm and stress. Let this fire, enkindled in every German breast, be a fire of joy, of holiest enthusiasm. But let it be terrible, unfettered; let it carry horror and destruction! Call it hate! Let no one come to you with "Love thine enemy!" We all have but one enemy—ENGLAND!

How long have we wooed her almost to the point of our own self-abasement? She would none of us, so leave to her the apostles of peace, the "No War" disciples. The time has passed when we would do homage to everything English—our cousins that were!

"God punish England!"—"May He punish her!" This is the greeting that now passes when Germans meet. The fire of this righteous hate is all aglow!

You men of Germany from East and West, forced to shed your blood in the defence of your homeland, through England's infamous envy and hatred of Germany's progress, feed the flame that burns in your souls. We have but one War Cry: "God punish England!" Hiss this one to another in the trenches, in the charge; hiss as it were the sound of licking flames. Behold in every dead comrade a sacrifice forced from you by this accursed people. Take tenfold vengeance for each hero's death!

You German people at home, feed this fire of hate!

You mothers, engrave this in the heart of the babe at your breast!

You thousands of teachers to whom millions of German children look up with eyes and hearts, teach Hate, unquenchable Hate! You homes of German learning, pile up the fuel on this fire.

Tell the nation that this hate is not un-German, that it is not poison for our people. Write in letters of fire the name of our bitterest enemy. You guardians of the truth, feed this sacred hate!

You German fathers, lead your children up to the high hills of our homeland, at the feet of our dear country bathed in sunshine. Your women and children shall starve: bestial, devilish conception. England wills it! Surely all that is in you rises against such infamy!

Listen to the ceaseless song of the German forest, behold the fruitful fields like rolling seas, then will your love for this wondrous land find the right words, "Hate, unquenchable Hate! Germany, Germany above all!"

Let it be inculcated in your children, and it will grow like a landslide, irresistible, from generation to generation.

You fathers, proclaim it aloud over the billowing fields, that the toiling peasant below may hear you, that the birds of the forest may fly away with the message: into the land that echoes from German

cliffs send it reverberating like the clanging of bells from tower to tower throughout the country side:

"Hate, Hate, the accursed English, Hate!"

You masters, carry the flame to your workshops. Axe and hammer will fall the heavier when arms are nerved by this Hate.

You peasants, guard this flame, fan it anew in the hearts of your toilers that the hand may rest heavy on the plough that throws up the soil of our homeland.

What CARTHAGE was to ROME, ENGLAND is to GERMANY.

For ROME as for us it is a question of "to be or not to be."

May our people find a faithful mentor like Cato.

HIS CETERUM CENSEO, CARTHAGINEM ESSE DELENDAM for us means

"GOD PUNISH ENGLAND."

Some people laud the "thoroughness" of the German Army.

I wonder if they laud the "thoroughness" of its hate.

The Army under Sir John French was assuming considerable proportions early in April. In addition to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Divisions, the 27th and 28th, the Canadian Division and the Divisions of the Indian Corps, as well as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions and the Indian Cavalry Division, were well seasoned. The North Midland, 2nd London and South Midland Territorial Divisions were "out," and fast gaining experience and a good reputation with it, while the Northumberland Territorial Division was on the way.

G.H.Q. information summaries in the early days of April said laconically, "Nothing to report on the British front," and were generally fairly correct.

On the 8th and 9th the roads leading from the Ypres district were filled with French troops moving southward. The veterans of the 9th Corps limped past, frost-bite having visited most of them during their long sojourn in the trenches of the Salient.

Lines of French guns ambled by, "75's," with their graceful light grey lines, were eminently business-like, their gunners clad in

dark blue cape-overcoats that looked warm and comfortable.

The 1st Cavalry Division was given a new brigade, the 9th, which consisted of the 15th Hussars, 19th Lancers and the Warwickshire Territorial Battery.

Bumping over the bad roads at good speed meant frequent car trouble. I was fortunate to find Harold Smith, the Royal Automobile Club Engineer, one day at Boulogne, where he was superintending the installation of a first-class motor repair plant for the Red Cross Ambulances. Mieville, of the Red Cross, in whose hands were all matters pertaining to Red Cross motor vehicles, proved a good Samaritan. Between Mieville and Smith my decrepit car was given a new lease of life.

The Army Service Corps would have done well to have "co-opted" Smith and one or two more like him. His repair shop at Boulogne, when completed, was so far ahead of any repair park possessed by the Army in France that comparison made the Army shops look very bad indeed. Yet Smith's work was done in three weeks or less and a building of quite a temporary character utilised.

While I was in Boulogne an Army Service Corps captain came to Harold Smith and said: "I have been told to lay down a foundry, and unfortunately know nothing whatever about the bally thing. Do you happen to know anything about a foundry?"

"Well," replied Smith, "I have a fairly good idea of what you will need. Suppose I draw up a specification of a foundry installation to-night and let you have it to-morrow?"

"Delighted," said the captain. "It would be good of you."

So Smith set to work, duly completed the specification, and turned it over to the A.S.C. man, who went away, quite happy, at once to put in the specification as it was handed to him. He admittedly had no knowledge as to its correctness and was quite satisfied to seek none.

I met Moore-Brabazon, of the Flying-Corps, on the quay. With a few days' leave in his pocket, he was as happy as a sandboy.

"We had a chap rejoin us a day or so ago," said "Brab," "who had a remarkable story to tell. His name is Mapplebeck. He is an officer in the Liverpool Regiment, attached to the R.F.C.

"Not long ago, Mapplebeck was up alone on a scout near Lille, when his engine went wrong, and he had to make a descent. He knew he was well inside the German lines, but was shocked to see a couple of Huns, apparently doing sentry duty, not far from where he had planned to land.

"The two Germans ran toward the machine as it came down, each grabbing hold of the left wing. The biplane tossed and rolled and pitched about as it came to rest. Mapplebeck tumbled out on the right side, dived head first through a thick hedge a few feet distant, and ran hot-foot down a deep ditch that led to a cross-hedge not far away.

"He lost no time in dodging through the further hedge, and was off like a hare down another ditch. The Huns must have taken the wrong turning when pursuing him, as he got clear away and hid in a dwelling till night.

"Obtaining some peasant clothing, Mapplebeck made his way into Lille. Though the town was full of Germans, his disguise was so good he was not bothered in any way. Finding a loyal French business man, Mapplebeck cashed a London cheque, for which he received

French notes bearing a German stamp. With these he bought a suit of clothing, and started to tramp the road to Belgium.

"He reached Belgium safely, kept on, and eventually crossed the Dutch border. Obtaining passage to London, he at once went to Farnborough and reported. There he was given a new machine which was ready to come to France. He lost no time in bringing it across the channel and reporting for duty, just as though nothing unusual had happened.

"One by one we obtained from him the details of his experiences. He was mightily modest about it all, and laughed at the idea that he had done anything that was the least bit out of the ordinary."

On April 17th the 2nd Cavalry Division held a horse show at Vieux Berquin. The horses and the riding were worthy of the best that Dublin or Olympia could produce.

Sunday, the 18th, I had set aside for a joy-ride. Running to St. Omer, I picked up Major St. Leger, of the Irish Guards, Assistant Camp Commandant, and then called at a farm near Meteren, where the 9th Lancers' Headquarters were billeted.

Beale-Browne, "Bimbo" Reynolds, Rex Benson and Alex Graham, were out enjoying the perfect morning, but we luckily found Captain "Algy" Court, of the 9th, who had been in the hospital when the Brigade was at Ypres, and thus missed seeing the Salient. This made him the more keen to have a look at the famous Menin Road. Calling at General Mullens's headquarters at Godawaersvelde, in the hope of annexing "Rattle" Barrett, "Jeff" Hornby or Romer Williams, but finding the Brigade Staff absent to a man, we pushed on to Poperinghe, where we procured a very passable luncheon in a crowded hotel.

Finally we reached Ypres, ran through it, and out on the Menin Road toward Hooge. Court was very anxious to run on to Hooge, but I had been told a car could be seen by the Huns as it approached that delectable spot, and I therefore counselled discretion. "Algy" pressed hard for a visit to Hooge itself, saying he was most eager to inspect the "trenches to the south of the road." St. Leger wavered, but finally agreed with me that to "run into one" when joy-riding would look bad, so we

satisfied ourselves with watching the bursting shells from a safe distance.

Only a few weeks later, "Algy" Court was killed in those very trenches to the south of the Menin Road at Hooge, when the 9th Lancers, badly gassed and heavily attacked on front and left flank—all but outflanked, in fact—held on gallantly during a day of the fiercest of fighting, and saved the line.

While we were on Menin Road little groups of wounded Tommies came past. A Canadian Staff officer told us the K.O.S.B.'s, and the West Kents had rushed a German position on a hill in front of Zillebeke, after our engineers had exploded a mine under it. About 200 yards of enemy trench had been taken, and fifteen prisoners, including two officers, captured. From them it was learned that at least 150 Huns, most of whom must have been killed, were in the destroyed trench.

"The K.O.S.B.'s and the West Kents," said the Canadian, "are hanging on to the captured area, in spite of continual heavy counter-attacks by the Germans. We had just had a message from our chaps asking for help to hold on."

As he spoke a roar burst forth on the line

not far away, seeming to me to come from a point just south of Cavan's House. For fifteen minutes Hun howitzer shells fell in scores on the luckless area of the successful advance. The air reverberated with the crashes of the huge shells, which fell in such rapid succession one could not count them.

After we left Ypres, we heard still another fierce deluge of shell-fire fall on that spot late in the afternoon.

Such was the commencement of the fight for Hill 60, near Verbranden Molen, which was to be contested bitterly for many a day, costing thousands of casualties to friend and foe. The next day, the 19th, the Germans tried to win back the position at the point of the bayonet, and succeeded in gaining a foot-hold on the southern slope of the hill, only to lose it after a hand to hand fight that afternoon.

The Huns also gave Ypres and the Menin Road a heavy shelling for an hour on the 19th, just twenty-four hours too late to catch our "joy party." The day of our visit was the last one that found the Menin Road a safe place, for daily thereafter the 17-inch shells were busy with the terrible work that was to end in the

utter devastation of Ypres—work which was to continue for the rest of April, through May, and well into June, with but little respite.

A couple of days later the West Surreys had a fight for Hill 60 that nearly swept away the battalion. The Germans brought up some field guns and hammered away at our parapets at close range. When the West Surreys came out, after gallantly holding the position until relieved, a subaltern was the senior officer left in command. The "Princess Pat's," too, were to leave the majority of their officers there. Hill 60 took toll of all but a remnant of that regiment.

We dropped "Algy" Court at his billets, then hastened to St. Omer, where a good dinner was awaiting us. St. Leger's mess was always a cheery one, having among its members Surgeon-General O'Donnell, Colonel Cummings, of the R.A.M.C., Colonel Warren, of the Army Post Office, and Colonel Thresher, the Camp Commandant. That night Colonel Father Keating and Captain Father Rawlinson were fellow-guests, two greatly beloved "Padres," in either of whom was sufficient subtle merriment and quiet humour to cheer up a whole corps of pessimists.

A captured German order gave rather gruesome details of a liquid-fire thrower of sorts, intended, so the order said, for fighting in streets and houses.

The German official report accused the British at Hill 60 of using shells containing poisonous fumes.

Odd forerunners, these, in the light of subsequent events, for on Friday, April 23rd, came the first German gas attack.

The 23rd dawned bright and clear, a perfect spring morning. Soon after daybreak word came that the Germans had broken the French line between Bixschoote and Langemarck. The 1st Cavalry Division was ordered to concentrate between Ecke and Godawaersvelde, preparatory to being sent up in support.

The Germans had sprung their first gas attack in the grey of dawn, launching the asphyxiating fumes at a portion of the allied line held by the 78th French Reservist Division.

The success of the new manœuvre had been extraordinary. That it far exceeded the most sanguine hopes of the Germans was clear from the fact that very few troops were available to take advantage of so great a hole in the allied

line. No German cavalry was sufficiently near at hand to be utilised. That this point was brought well home to the Huns was made clear to us within very few hours afterward, for before the second gas attack the Germans had moved up a couple of corps of cavalry to a point within call.

But the opportunity had passed. Gas, when its use was unexpected, its effect multiplied by ignorance as to what it really was, and vague conjecture as to what it might be, and gas when our troops were expecting it and had been warned as to its objects and dangers, were very different propositions.

That the German gas attacks were for some time most demoralising, and often locally successful, was not to be denied; but some part of the line invariably held, and made the local enemy gain of less importance. Respirators assisted men to stay in their trenches in spite of the coming of the noxious fumes. Of far more value was the gradual realisation on the part of the men that gas could be withstood, and might or might not envelope them in sufficient quantity to produce a deadly effect.

Those French reservists who first were

wrapped in the strange greenish-yellow mist that left them gasping for air and dying of strangulation, were not to be too greatly condemned for the general scamper that ensued. Under the circumstances, the indefinable and inexplicable horror would very likely have torn the line from the grasp of the most seasoned troops of either the French or British armies. Later I saw battalions of English veterans in utter demoralization by the coming of the gas, and it was many a day before the sight of a gas cloud failed to bring great terror to many a soldier who had to face it.

By ten o'clock on the morning of the 23rd the situation seemed most serious. Back from the Bixschoote-Langemarck line the French had come to the line of the canal that leads south from Steenstraate to Ypres. At a point not far from Boesinghe the Huns had actually crossed to the west bank of the canal, were at the very doors of Boesinghe, and had taken Het-Sas and Lizerne to the north. Lizerne was well to the west of the canal, and on the main Dixmude-Ypres road.

Messages that reached the 1st Cavalry Division, explaining the situation, were addressed

to the Cavalry Corps, Indian Cavalry, 2nd Army, and the new Northumbrian Territorial Division. All these units were to be engaged on that front before many days had passed.

General De Lisle ran to 5th Corps Headquarters in Poperinghe before eleven o'clock. We passed battalion after battalion of the North Country Terriers along the road, trudging sturdily Ypreswards, or lying in the fields for a breather.

Ambulances were continually arriving in Poperinghe, full of wounded and gassed Tommies.

I met Major Moore, of the Canadian Division, who told me the Canadians had been "at it hard." Another Canadian acquaintance, a wounded officer, came past, and told me something of the situation.

The Canadians had won laurels that morning by an action which showed clearly the great military value of individual initiative in the private soldier. That is the quality that made British generals think the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who were lost at the Dardanelles the finest men that had yet been produced in the great world-war.

In dug-outs in front of Wieltje and west of St. Julien, some of the Canadians were unaware of the gas attack until the Germans had driven the French well back and come on after them to such close quarters that the grey lines were clearly visible to the surprised Canadian eyes.

Grabbing rifles and ammunition pouches, with no time for company or battalion formation, officers and men rushed toward the advancing lines of Huns, and seeking such cover as could be found, opened a fierce fire at short range. The natural, inborn individual fighting spirit of men raised in the open—men to whose hands a rifle was no stranger—met the situation with such instinctive cohesion of action that the Huns were driven back and the line saved.

A 5th Corps Staff officer told us the Canadians had actually saved the day and had established, during the early hours of the morning, a crescent-shaped line from the Canal south-east of Boesinghe to a point just north of St. Julien, the crescent bending southward as the line crossed the Ypres-Langemarck road. From this line they were gradually being forced south by heavy German attacks.

From one to two o'clock our Divisional Headquarters waited by the roadside in the western edge of Poperinghe while our three brigades came up, preparatory to a move toward the scene of battle.

That hour of inaction was crammed with scenes that told of the heavy fighting ahead of us. Lyne-Stephens, convoying a couple of dozen of the splendid Du Cros ambulances, full to overflowing with shattered men, hurried past *en route* for Hazebrouck. As a hospital train of twelve coaches, every available corner containing a wounded Tommy, steamed west, scores of motor omnibuses hurried eastward toward the sound of the guns, every khaki-coloured 'bus with its complement of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Terriers of the North Midland Division. Refugees laden with cardboard boxes, pushing loaded bicycles or pulling-carts groaning under tall piles of household effects, added to the road's congestion. Detachments of infantry marching on, guns rattling up, ammunition trains urging their claims to special facilities for a clear road, added to the *mêlée*.

Over this highway, jammed with two lines

of traffic bound in each direction, the 1st Cavalry Division and its transport pushed its way, through Poperinghe, where railway trains were debouching long lines of blue-clad French regulars, and then on along the road toward Elverdinghe, to the eastward.

General de Lisle went first to Woesten, which we found full of French territorial troops. Shells had fallen in the village during the morning, but none were bursting near when we arrived.

We started down the road toward Elverdinghe but had not gone far when Bang! bang! just in front, then the whirr of shrapnel bullets, the sharp crack as they struck the *pavé* a few yards ahead, and spurts of dirt and dust, told us that the roadway was receiving attention at the hands of the Boche gunners.

I pulled the car up sharply, and as I did so two more shrapnel burst a few feet above the road in front of us, the missiles from the exploding shells singing past and striking all about with nasty smacks, as if in boasting evidence of a creditable amount of velocity and precision.

One regiment of our Division was assigned

duty as a reserve for the Belgian left, which was not far north of us. Another regiment was to act as reserve for the French in front of us. The remainder of the Division was a sort of general reserve, to be utilised wherever and whenever necessity arose.

A run to Elverdinghe showed that it had been heavily shelled, the church being riddled with great holes. Our line was pushed to the east of the town. An ambulance driver who had been left in Elverdinghe told me he was sure "someone will get it in this hole soon," and he proved to be no bad prophet.

As dark closed we learned that the Canadians' line had been forced back, but the support line had held firm as a rock, and our men were counter-attacking most gallantly as the day ended. The rumph! rumph! of the howitzer shells increased in frequency, the cannonade swelling in volume as the night came.

A good sized château between Poperinghe and Elverdinghe housed our Headquarters Staff for the night.

A run to Cassel at daybreak was a maddening experience, the road from Steenvoorde to Poperinghe being packed and jammed with all

manner of horse and motor transport. A big five-ton lorry belonging to the Canadians had broken down as it was being turned in the narrow roadway. Result, an immovable barrier across the *pavé.*

If ever in my life I longed to tamper with a job that was "none of my business," I did so on that 24th of April. Organisation of the traffic on that congested road could have been so easily done with a dozen assistants, and hours saved to all users of the road.

Thousands of light French *camions* were waiting at Cassel for train-load after train-load of French troops from Arras. The 9th Corps, which had so few days previously left Ypres, after a sojourn of there of many months, was being hurried back as fast as steam and petrol could bring it.

That morning I was given a message for General de Lisle from the French Corps Commander, to the effect that the British Cavalry was required in the front line.

Temporary divisional headquarters had been established at the fourth kilometre stone on the Elverdinghe road, to allow messages from regiments or brigades easily to find it.

When I arrived with the message I transmitted it to Major Fitzgerald, then set off to seek de Lisle, who, "Fitz" said, was making a tour of the line, and could be found either in Woesten or Elverdinghe.

I chose the latter objective. The way was lined by great black French Spahis, clad in variegated garb and wondrous head gear, for the first couple of kilometres. As we approached Elverdinghe, all signs of life vanished. An odd stillness brooded over the immediate vicinity, a sort of local lull in the maelstrom of sound the shell-bursts were making and had made throughout the night, a couple of miles to the eastward.

A half instinctive pause in the edge of the village, and a moment spent in tense listening, gave me an uncanny feeling of solitude. As I stood, undecided whether to push on into the town or circle back for Woesten, the silence was mashed to reverberating atoms by an 8-in. howitzer shell, which fell not far from the town.

Bang! rumph! r-r-r-rumph! Bang! Shrapnel and high explosive seemed to come together.

Another and another shell followed, then a

blinding crash as I was turning my car and a shell burst in the square not far away, showering bits of shell and *débris* over me.

The pieces slap-slapped resoundingly against the metal panels of the car, and one good-sized stone was hurled against my back.

As I raced away to safety towards Poperinghe, the shells still came into the village and around it, and followed the road at my back, urging me on.

Shortly afterwards I saw Captain Bertram Neame, the Adjutant of the 18th Hussars, who had been wounded in the right hand and arm by one of the shells.

"An aeroplane marked with red, white and blue rings, but evidently a German flying false colours, circled round over the battery near us," said Neame, "and half a dozen German shrapnel fell there at once. Then the 'plane circled over the farm containing 18th Headquarters, and another farm which was sheltering most of A Squadron. Immediately afterwards shells poured into the two farms, and several of the men were hit."

Months after I read the diary of Captain T. O. Thompson, of the R.A.M.C., who was attached to the 18th Hussars.

His graphic account of the shelling in Elverdinghe that morning read as follows: "A Squadron were in the next farm, and all their men sleeping peacefully in the sunshine against the wall of a barn, when, without warning, a 'coalbox' arrived and landed full on one man. They found only an arm and a leg and his head. The next arrived later and wounded two men. The inhabitants of the farm cleared at a run, and some French territorials, who had been in that farm for seven months, went like greased lightning.

"The Colonel (Burnett), and Adjutant (Neame), and Captain H. (Holdsworth), walked about thirty yards up the road, when a shell arrived and wounded the Adjutant in the hand and H. in the back. It hit the Colonel on the back, fortunately on the belt, and slightly wounded him in the thigh. It bruised the Major, who was twenty yards away, on the shin.

"The Germans kept on putting shells along the road, and then started on the village. They were the beastly 8·2 high explosives, and were going just over us on to the Poperinghe road. Six horses were going up this road when a shell landed about fifteen yards

short of it. One of the grooms was badly wounded, one killed, being lifted into and left hanging in one of the trees by the roadside.

"Then the 4th Dragoon Guards came down the road on foot and passed into the village, but came out again as a shell greeted them in the square. They came off the road, and came along a hollow near the stream toward us. The rear squadron was marching along a ditch behind a hedge-row in two-deep formation when a beastly shell landed right in the ditch and hurled four of them sixty feet into the air. Two others were killed as well. Brown, a 4th D.G. Lieutenant, was one of the four; his hand was found in the stream one hundred and fifty yards away."

All things considered, I was lucky to get out of Elverdinghe unhurt that morning.

I found General de Lisle as he was returning from Woesten with Captain Nicholson; I then ran to Woesten with a message for General Briggs.

General de Lisle was faced with the fact that he was acting as reserve to the British left, and therefore suggested to the French commander that the French reserves should first be used,

and the British cavalry only called upon to occupy the front French line when no further French reserves were available, a suggestion of which the French General at once saw the wisdom.

Returning from Woesten, Nicholson and I found we must make a *détour*, as the narrow country road was completely blocked by French horse transport.

Dashing into Poperinghe at high speed we were surprised to see the townsfolk running hither and thither in great fright and confusion. Six great shells had been thrown the long distance from the enemy line and landed in the town. They had come but a couple of minutes before, a scared Belgian told us.

I lost no time, swinging through the square and out on the Elverdinghe road at high speed. No sooner were we clear of the centre of the town than Hun shells screamed wickedly over us on their way toward the railway station, exploding not far behind us with tremendous concussion. Guns of large calibre were being used by the Germans.

First Cavalry Division Headquarters was moved from the kilometre stone to an *estaminet*

Damage caused by a 17-inch shell in Poperinghe, April, 1915

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Red Cross ambulances on the coast

see p. 130

near by, as the inhabitants had brought up two great wagons and decamped therein with bag and baggage.

Tales of Canadian prowess and fine work by the 13th Infantry Brigade, which was sent to their support, were mingled with conflicting reports of the number of guns captured by the Germans. First, the loss of a couple of dozen was admitted by the French. Before a week had passed we knew the number actually taken by the Germans was much greater.

Ypres, we heard, had been so heavily shelled the day before that the entire town had been evacuated.

All the morning I watched ambulances full of wounded French soldiers *en route* for Poperinghe, file past war-worn batteries of "75's," pushing toward the front. The begrimed French gunners, with their cheery faces, seemed to know the esteem in which we held them and their splendid guns, and to be keen to get into action and stem the advance of the Germans, which was slowly but steadily surging towards us though our men were fighting hard every inch of the way.

The Belgian refugees poured back, forced

off the road by the lorries, ambulances and guns. Slight mothers with numerous progeny, one, or sometimes two, of the lesser units in arms, toiled by. Each person, young or old, capable of carrying a load, bore heavy burdens. Bicycles with huge bundles balanced on the saddle, were pushed westward haltingly, as road-space permitted. One lad passed on crutches, flanked by two grand-dames carrying blue buckets crammed tight with portions of the family wardrobe.

Most of the faces of the refugees bore a stolid, matter-of-fact expression. Some were quite cheerful. Many seemed stoically numbed to all feeling. The strong wind tossed their unwieldy bundles, and they stumbled awkwardly out of the path of hurrying traffic, their feet bruised against the loose stones that edged the *pavé*. Tired, dirty, buffeted by the gale, with strained and aching muscles and broken feet, fleeing from death or worse, and in their flight abandoning their worldly all, I wondered there were not more signs of heart-sickness and despair on their thin faces.

Shells screamed over us and ploughed great holes in the British aviation park east of

Poperinghe. After the first half dozen of such visitors, the Flying Corps packed up and took its departure for safer quarters.

A wounded Canadian said the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Brigades in front of us were wiped out as a fighting force. Their trenches, he told us had been literally blown to bits. A counter-attack by the Canadians, the 13th Brigade and the French 45th Division on their left, had started well, but failed to achieve much. German batteries and machine guns greatly outnumbered ours and were taking heavy toll as the battle surged backwards and forwards.

Before the day was over the French reported that they had recaptured Lizerne.

Night closed with an increasing din from the arms of all sorts and calibres on our front, never to cease for the whole night through.

I was sent after dark to G.H.Q. at St. Omer, a journey that meant many a long hour of tedious waiting in the midst of the tangled skein of traffic along the way.

Returning at daybreak on Sunday, the 25th, I planned a round-about route from Steenvoorde to Poperinghe, circling well north of the main

road. I had travelled but a few kilometres when I found the narrow, muddy road in front of me completely blocked by a train of French lorries, laden with troops. Some of the vehicles were mired, and the block bid fair to be immovable for hours. By sheer luck I stopped opposite a farmyard, in which I turned the car, and not far back gained a cross-road. A mile beyond the route was rendered absolutely impassable by two detachments of British transport, which had met face to face on a road barely wide enough for one.

"We have been here a divil of a toime," said a cheery Irish driver at the rear of the column, "and from the look of it beyant there, we'll be slapin' here in the mud this night."

Nothing daunted, I turned, pushed by willing hands when deep mud made assistance necessary, and headed the other way. But fate was unkind. Again I found the road barricaded, this time by two signal lorries that had, like me, tried a *détour*. One had skidded sideways and stuck fast. The other was trying to pull his fellow back on to the roadway. Disheartened, I soon tired of what threatened to be a long wait, and returned toward

Steenvoorde. A new convoy of French troop-lorries closed this avenue of escape, but after an hour of floundering through almost impassable lanes, I reached Abele, on the main road, and was soon thereafter in Poperinghe.

Truly an ounce of prevention in the way of road organisation and route selection by some competent authority would have been worth many pounds of the condemnation poured forth with volubility by all road users in those days of tiresome traffic tangles.

Our headquarters moved to an *estaminet* just outside Woesten.

I learned, on arrival, that at midnight word had come from the French Commander, General Putz, whose headquarters were but a few hundred yards distant, to the effect that a mistake had been made in a previous report, and Lizerne was still in the hands of the enemy.

The roads were filled with French troops moving up, and relieved reservists coming back, while battery on battery of grey "75's" wheeled past.

"I don't know where they are going to put any *more* guns," said Budworth, our Divisional

C.R.A., "the whole country round is stiff with 'em now."

Fresson, the French liaison officer attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, sought at French headquarters an explanation of the situation on the extreme French left, where the Belgian right joined it.

"Lizerne was attacked by French and Belgians, and Pilkem by French only," said Fresson, on his return. "The mix-up in the report was due to the Belgians. The story of Lizerne is indefinite, except that the Germans were not driven out, as reported. As to the Pilkem attack, this failed utterly, due to wire, machine-guns, and general concentration by the enemy of the position they had captured.

"A further attack," continued Fresson, "is to be made this morning at 10.30., when the Pilkem ridge is to be again stormed."

The Pilkem ridge was east of our part of the front, not far distant from the canal itself. The sounds of battle from the line facing it were continually in our ears.

General Smith-Dorrien drove by. One of his Staff told me that at ten o'clock on the night before (Saturday night) 200 Canadians

were still in St. Julien, though the line had been pressed back, leaving the little band cut off and surrounded by Germans. All night they had fought on, and were still fighting.

Some of our men had gotten up sufficiently close to hear the Huns call out to the gallant Canadians in a lull in the firing: "Surrender, Canadians! We are around you! You have no chance!"

"See you damned first! Come and get us," was the answer sent back in the night by a clear young Canadian voice, and Bedlam was again let loose.

That was the spirit of the men that Canada sent to France to fight for the Empire.

On the Sunday morning, said the Staff officer, a determined effort was being made to relieve what remained of the gallant 200.

All our attacks that day and those of the French as well failed. Lizerne remained in enemy hands, and the last of the heroic two hundred Canadians had evidently fallen in St. Julien before night, for all sounds of firing from that direction ceased. Strive as they would, our troops had been unable to reach and succour them, though costly efforts were

not wanting. Weeks and months afterwards anxious ones waited for word from some of that noble little band in St. Julien, but no word ever came from German hospital or prison camp. They had fought on to the last man, to the bitter end!

At night the Germans attacked Broodseinde, east of Zonnebeke, with great ferocity, but were driven back by our 5th Corps troops.

What was left of the Canadian 2nd Brigade was holding Gravenstafel, just north of Zonnebeke, and not far to the south-west of Passchendaele. The Huns poured mass on mass against the depleted ranks of the Canadians, who were compelled to fall back, evacuating Gravenstafel, but stubbornly disputing every foot of ground lost.

The night of Sunday, the 25th, closed in, with little in the situation to cheer us, except the knowledge that the entire vicinity of the Ypres Salient and the line to the north of it was crowded with fresh French and British troops and battery on battery of guns.

By Monday night the London Sunday papers had reached us.

What was our surprise to see that the

London press was greatly cheered by the meagre French and British official reports, and united in condemning the German official reports, which were flatly characterised as lying inventions.

The German official reports were, as a matter of fact, in that particular instance, more correct than either the French or British official reports.

The French report declared Lizerne and Het-Sas to have been taken from the Huns. The Huns had never been driven out of either town.

The British report was vaguely optimistic, evidently bent on minimising the German gains. It was so worded that 999 men out of 1,000 would understand from it that most of the ground lost on the 23rd and the days immediately following had been won back from the enemy. Certain it was that no one would gain the idea from the British official report that the Huns had been steadily forcing our line back, that our counter-attacks had failed, and that the Ypres Salient was then so threatened that no one but a madman would deny that further reconstruction of our line around Ypres, involving the giving up of a large section of our front line had become a

military necessity, to be performed at the earliest moment such a manœuvre could be carried out. Indeed, the section of our line to be abandoned must needs be far greater than that the enemy had won by his surprise gas attack against the French.

I do not wish to give the impression from the foregoing that the German reports were, as a rule, more correct than French or British official *pronunciamientos*. I think they were by no means so to be described. In matters of fact, as to captures of men or guns, or details as to bits of line lost or won, the Hun official reports were less often incorrect than some might think. Now and then, when dealing with some matter of conjecture, such as an estimate of our casualties, they were absurdly wide of the mark. The average French official report might err slightly as regarded detail, but was in the main most dependable. Our chief quarrel with the official reports as issued by the War Office to the British Press was that they were at times subject to more than one interpretation. Escaping actual inaccuracy, they did not always convey the impression at Home warranted by the facts at the Front.

On the morning of the 26th I ran toward Wieltje, and obtained details of the exact position of the lines.

The French left touched the Belgian right along the Yser-Ypres Canal north of Lizerne, where the German line was pushed to its further western point. The French line ran close to Het-Sas and crossed to the east of the canal a few hundred yards south of Boesinghe.

At a point a couple of thousand yards east of the canal the British left joined the extreme French right.

From that junction our line ran eastward through Fortuin, a village half a mile south of St. Julien, then north-east toward Gravenstafel, then south-east to Broodseinde.

At two o'clock that afternoon a grand attack was planned, all along that east-and-west line.

The 13th Brigade was on the left; two companies of the Rifle Brigade and the East Kents came next; five battalions of the 10th Brigade and a battalion in reserve were near Fortuin; on their right was the 11th Brigade; east of them were the York and Durham Territorial Brigades. The Northumbrian Territorial Division was in the

Wieltje area in reserve, and the Lahore Division was coming up to the north of Verlorenhoek, on the right of the Northumberland Terriers.

Our forces, to be sent forward in attack, numbered over two score battalions, say, 40,000 men.

The Canadians had been withdrawn from the Salient to take stock of their battered remnants and fill their ranks with reserves from England. They had been tried in the fire and could be proud of having gained the name of one of the most brilliant fighting contingents that had been seen on the British front since the commencement of the War.

The French were again to attack the Pilkem ridge at two o'clock, when the British line, between four and five miles long, was to push vigorously northward in a desperate attempt to drive the Huns from the ground gained by gas attack three days before.

Our share in the show was small. The following order was issued to the brigades:

"At two p.m. to-day the French will attack Lizerne and Het-Sas. The 1st Cavalry Division are ordered to support the left flank of

the French, acting in reserve. The Division will be saddled up by two p.m. and the horses of the 1st Cavalry Brigade collected in the area south-west of Woesten. By two p.m. the 1st Cavalry Brigade will assemble, dismounted, north of the Woesten-Oostoleteren road, about the nineteenth kilometre stone, ready to support in the direction of Pypegaale, if required. The 2nd and 9th Brigades will remain in their present positions, ready to support the 1st Cavalry Brigade dismounted."

This gave vague promise of a bit of fun, as Pypegaale was only a mile from the coveted Lizerne, to which the Huns were holding so doggedly.

But our participation in the mill was only to take place in the event of the French attack ending in disaster or resulting in such extraordinary success that the Germans would be put to absolute rout.

The shells fell all about in those days, and rarely did I visit the support positions—which I did scores of times each day—when the air was not full of the droning shells of our own and the French batteries, pounding the enemy's positions on the canal.

Shell-fire; aeroplanes, British, French and German; anti-aircraft shells, both ours and those of the enemy, and passing troops and batteries became such common sights as the hours went by that one hardly bestowed on them a passing glance.

A Belgian woman was caught, near a battery position, flashing signals with a piece of bright tin to a Hun airman high overhead. The French took her away, one stout soldier to each arm, to summary execution.

Children were at play at the roadside. A dozen boys were engaged in a mock bombardment. A bottle served as the hostile town. Stones made good shells. All waited for the order, "Fire!" and then rained shots at the target with a will. Now and then one of the children would say, "Rumph! rumph!" mockingly, as a Black Maria fell near enough to jar them, but for the most part they paid scant attention to the fierce cannonade in progress all about.

In a field by the road a man was ploughing stolidly. A woman was hanging her washing on the line, singing as she worked. A 13-pounder anti-aircraft shell buried itself a few

yards away, but she evinced no interest in it, and did not even allow its coming to interrupt her song.

Artillery work in modern warfare is carefully organised. It was difficult to realise in the midst of such an inferno of shell-fire that every gunner, who was so hard at work in those April days, had some definite objective when launching shells enemy-ward.

Major Budworth was directed to conduct the artillery attack on Lizerne. In other words, the guns of H and I Batteries of the Royal Horse Artillery were to pave the way for the French infantry attack.

General Putz was anxious to retake Lizerne and Steenstraate as well. The latter town was on the canal, a few hundred yards east of Lizerne, and astride the Dixmude-Ypres highway, along which German reserves, to meet the attack on Lizerne, must be brought.

Budworth placed the batteries near Woesten, about 3,000 yards from Lizerne, which was surrounded by country so flat and so dotted with groups of trees that artillery observation was difficult.

A couple of gunners were sent into the

French front trenches at 11.30 a.m. to observe the range-finding shots.

The Lizerne attack had been timed for 2.30 p.m. All watches had been most carefully synchronized. At 12.15 p.m., to the very second, H Battery fired three shots, then, after an interval, three shots more. Five minutes after the second trio had been sent Hun-ward, I Battery also fired six shots in groups of three. The observation officers on reconnaissance 'phoned back to the batteries from the French line, and gave minute details as to errors in range of the dozen shells, adding such information as would allow a more correct setting of the timing-fuses.

Errors in direction at such range—3,000 to 4,000 yards make an ideal range for the British 13-pounder and 18-pounder field-guns — were rare, in view of the fact that our gunners were provided with accurate large scale maps from which the range could be splendidly laid.

To get the guns closer to the enemy than 3,000 yards made it possible that the gunners might be subjected to hostile rifle fire, if the line should be forced back slightly. At such close range as 2,000 yards so low a trajectory

was necessary that cover was rarely possible. Further, the supplying of ammunition to the guns was, under such circumstances, a most difficult problem. If an artillery commander could place his field-guns within 3,000 yards of the enemy position he considered himself fortunate.

Budworth was compelled to use shrapnel, as the 13-pounders at the Front at that time had not been provided with high explosive shell, although it had been repeatedly promised. Had high explosive shell been available, one battery would have sent it hurtling against the walls and houses in the little village of Lizerne and the Germans hiding behind them. The other battery would have simultaneously swept the streets and open spaces with shrapnel. With no high explosive, the only alternative was to use long fuses in the shrapnel, which then burst on percussion against the buildings behind which the Huns were sheltering.

The observation from the front line was chiefly valuable as a guide to the timing of the shrapnel that was to be used to scatter the hundreds of bullets over the open spaces. A 13-pounder shrapnel contained about 285 bullets,

an 18-pounder, 365. The timing fuses burst none too accurately, at best. Atmospheric conditions frequently affected the burning of the fuses, and even the heating of the gun as it went into action sometimes did so.

H and I Batteries, having obtained the desired information from their observers as to the range and timing of their twelve shells, waited patiently until half past two o'clock.

At that hour, 400 shells were fired into Lizerne. For the first five minutes each battery fired four rounds per minute, then came a two-minute interval. For the next five minutes every one of the twelve guns in the two batteries fired five shots per minute. A second lull of two minutes was followed by still more rapid fire for another five minutes, six rounds per sixty seconds blazing forth from each of the dozen field-pieces, seventy-two shells per minute falling in the village. Thus they continued, the spasm of firing and the brief interval of stillness alternating, until the 400 shells had been fired.

That the work of the Horse Artillery was well done was apparent from the result. Its efficiency was confirmed later by captured

Germans wounded in Lizerne, who termed the place "Hell itself" while the initial bombardment was in progress.

But the work of the guns was by no means ended. The salvo died down at the appointed time. The French Colonial Zouaves rushed forward, bayonets in hand, with wild cries, and then the gunners were set to their task.

They fired another 400 rounds at the road from Steenstraate to Lizerne, a second road leading to Lizerne from the south-east, and a third road connecting the two. These three roads were the avenues most likely to be utilized by the Huns for bringing up reinforcements to meet the attack. "Searching" the roads and a couple of special points, one just back of a rise of ground, where it seemed possible reinforcements might be gathered, kept the gunners hard at work.

Shrapnel rained over such spots, bursting from twenty to thirty feet above ground, and spreading death all about.

Watching the two batteries in action gave me a high opinion of their abilities. Nothing in modern warfare was so fascinating a study as that of guns in action.

France, with her faith pinned to low trajectory and high muzzle velocity as exemplified in her wonderful "75's," and Germany's gun-religion, centring on weight of shell, made a formidable contrast.

The making of a field-piece was ever a compromise between those two schools—a gun firing a light shell straight and fast, or a gun in which speed and direct line were sacrificed to gain weight of projectile.

A 35-pound howitzer shell and an 18-pounder shrapnel, such as that fired by the British field artillery, were sent on their mission of death from guns of practically the same weight. Thus greatly did an increase in muzzle velocity mean a corresponding increase in avoirdupois.

Thirty-eight hundredweight was generally agreed by gun-experts the world over to be the weight permissible for field pieces; this limit being imposed by questions of mobility and transport.

It was to gain those assets so great to the French military mind, low trajectory and high muzzle velocity, that the weight of the "75" shell was dropped to 15 pounds.

Howitzer against field-gun, with high explosive shell for both, was German practice against

French practice. As one who became very tired of the continuous rain of big German howitzer shells, I must confess a wholesome respect for Hun theory in relation to questions of modern artillery. But no German gun, light or heavy, could, to my mind, compare with the wonderful "75."

A return to General Putz's headquarters found the French staff in possession of a report from the Front, to the effect that the Algerian Brigade had taken Lizerne, held all the trenches on the west side of the canal, and were preparing to cross the canal at Lizerne and Het-Sas.

Later developments showed the French officers in the fighting line had again been optimistic to a point of inaccuracy in reporting Lizerne captured. The next day it was discovered that the Germans still held two houses on the western edge of canal, and had "dug themselves in" in an entrenched bridge-head on the canal bank. The French troops were in a semicircle, 300 yards distant, and were bringing up, under cover of the night, "75's" on either side of the miniature German fort, and preparing to batter it down by high-explosive shells fired at point-blank range.

The 1st Cavalry Division left the reserve line before Lizerne was finally wholly clear of Germans.

All day the din of battle on the long front had been maddening. Ear-drums became tuned to it for a time. But periods of acute sensitiveness would recur, in which the sound seemed to beat against one's brain with a dull ache, punctuated with sharp pain from the constant concussion.

An evening message from 5th Corps Headquarters told of the failure of the great attack at 2 p.m., owing to gas fumes from the German trenches. A later attack had been organised, in which the Northumbrian Territorial Division had won from the enemy some trenches south-west of St. Julien, and then pushed on and captured St. Julien itself. The Manchesters, too, had taken some German trenches east of St. Julien.

But the good work was to be undone. That night the Huns won back St. Julien, and by daybreak on the 27th the line was practically where it had been twenty-four hours earlier, in spite of sad losses.

April 27th saw another strenuous effort by our gallant troops on that front. The southern edge of a wood, situated less than a mile west

A French "75" in the mud of a Flanders beet-field

An ambulance which was struck by a shell while carrying wounded from east of Ypres

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View showing depth of 17-inch shell hole in the garden of a château between Poperinghe and Elverdinghe

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of St. Julien, was penetrated, but later the men returned to our original line.

The German official report said that the Huns fairly mowed down British troops when they advanced near St. Julien, and their artillery caught our men as they were retiring and inflicted frightful losses. Unfortunately, there was no exaggeration in that report.

Arriving at our headquarters château, east of Poperinghe, we found that half an hour earlier a dozen or more 17-inch shells had fallen in and about the town.

Poperinghe was being shelled daily, eleven townsfolk having been killed on the afternoon before. Most of the population had sought a more salubrious locality.

Of great interest to us was a huge shell-hole that had just been made in the château garden, fifty yards from our sleeping quarters. It was over thirty feet in diameter and ten or twelve feet deep.

The big shell had shattered every window in that district, and the concussion had ruined most of the tiled roofs within sight. Great shell splinters, weighing from five to thirty pounds, still warm, were lying about.

That night, after eleven o'clock, when all were asleep, four more 17-inch visitors arrived in that edge of Poperinghe. All four shook the château to its foundations, one falling within 100 yards of it and smashing three dwelling houses into one mass of splinters, plaster and *débris.*

General de Lisle was sleeping on the floor of the château dining room. The first of the mammoth quartette so shook the building that a lustre chandelier, housed in a dust-covering and therefore unnoticed, became detached and fell to the polished floor below. Its myriad tiny pieces of glass jangled musically as they showered over the General, who was sleeping peacefully beneath. Fortunately, de Lisle was not hit by any of the heavier portions of the costly ornament, but his emotions on being awakened from deep slumber by the resounding smash of the shell, followed by the crash of the falling chandelier and the attendant rain of tuneful prisms, can better be imagined than described.

For the rest of the night, the headquarters staff—with the exception of de Lisle himself—repaired to the cellar in search of less inter-

rupted repose. The General, having ascertained that no other lustre chandelier was suspended from the ceiling, stuck to his original pitch.

The next morning at daybreak, 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters moved from that château, in spite of its many desirable attributes as a habitation.

On the 27th, General de Lisle sent me to the headquarters of Major Pilkington, of the 15th Hussars, on an errand. The reserve Belgian line was hard by. In backing my car, to turn it in the narrow lane, a bank of a reserve trench or ditch caved, and the poor car stood on its tail, at an uncomfortable and astonishing angle. Colonel Burnett and one of his 18th Hussar officers passed, and with their help and that of a dozen obliging 15th Hussar troopers, we attempted to move the brute. It resisted our combined efforts. Then the Belgians near by saw what had transpired and came at a run. In a jiffy the car was out, but having been lifted with more zeal than discretion was strained in so many places that it ran more like a crawfish than a car, until a week later, when time and opportunity allowed

me to substitute an ample and expensive list of new parts.

Plodding through Poperinghe late that afternoon, the first of seven or eight 17-inch Boche "big 'uns" fell close behind me. I felt, rather than heard, a crash, the wave of sound deafening me. Missiles rained down sharply on roofs, walls and paved roadway. Lame duck though it was, the car lifted itself and sped at a touch of the accelerator pedal. I heard some of the other shells explode, but was well out of harm's way by the time they arrived.

On the 28th of April the Division was moved back to a bivouac in the woods that lined the Poperinghe—Proven road, the main highway to Dunkirk.

Late in the afternoon, after a splendid day of lying in the sun, which was greatly appreciated by the whole Division, billets to the westward were assigned to us, and we trekked off without delay.

Wormhoudt, a French-Flemish town on the main road from Dunkirk to Cassel, was selected for headquarters, and there we rested for four days before returning to our old home, the La

Staff officers at lunch

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Looking east over the Menin Bridge at the edge of Ypres

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Nieppe château, on the road from Cassel to St. Omer.

En route to Wormhoudt we passed the Indian Cavalry, coming up to relieve us as reserve. The Poona Horse, Sind Lancers, and Inniskilling Dragoons presented a fine appearance as they rode by.

Rest was welcome to the Division. The troops had not been in the actual firing-line, but had been in continual occupation of reserve trenches for days, frequently under heavy shell-fire, and rarely with an opportunity for taking off their boots or sleeping elsewhere than in the open.

The villages and farms around Wormhoudt provided excellent billets for the troopers. Barns filled with straw and flax were warm and comfortable resting-places after the days and nights in cold, damp trenches.

So April ended peacefully for us, the Germans holding what they had won on the 23rd and closing the month with a vigorous bombardment of Dunkirk, a few miles north of us, which served no useful military purpose, but gave the Huns the satisfaction of killing a fair number of civilians, including a good bag of women and children.

CHAPTER V.

THE first days of May found me with but little work to do.

I spent some of my time running up into the Salient and hearing talk of preparations for a withdrawal of our line to a smaller horseshoe around Ypres. This was to be done as soon as all was ready for the move, and the utmost secrecy enveloped the operations.

I saw Rex Benson, of the 9th Lancers, who was acting temporarily as liaison officer with the French troops along the canal north of Ypres. Rex said the French had made but little progress towards the Pilkem ridge and General Putz had apparently decided to concentrate his position and give up open assault for the present.

The Hun howitzer fire was so fierce along the roads when I skirted Ypres on May 1st that I decided to desist visiting the Salient. In short, I got "cold feet" about the Ypres roads, and decided to do my joy-riding in other directions.

Romer Williams, of the 4th D.G.'s, and I went to St. Omer on the 2nd and brought out a couple of Romer's Red Cross friends, one a San Franciscan, named Sherman, at whose billet we had found marvellous cocktails. We all dined at General Mullens' headquarters, a gay party.

As we were feasting, the Huns in front of Ypres were up to more devilment. They let loose a heavy gas attack on the evening of the 2nd and made the British trenches south of St. Julien untenable. Our men retired, but the gas hung stationary for a few moments, and prevented an immediate German advance. This fortunate pause gave time for a concentration of all our guns on the spot. When the gas had dispersed sufficiently to allow an advance by the enemy, our gunners threw a *barrage de feu* across the German front as it emerged from St. Julien and the little wood to the west of it, and effectually stopped the way. Meantime, our men had regained their trenches.

The 2nd Cavalry Division, dismounted, was called up as support during this attack. To reach the trenches into which they were ordered

they found it necessary to advance across an enemy *barrage de feu.* The 4th Hussars and 5th Lancers were the regiments engaged. For a time it seemed they would be badly cut up, but luckily they got through the curtain of shells with only forty killed.

So *some* cavalry units had been thrown into the actual line, after all.

On the 3rd the 1st Cavalry Division moved back to its previous winter billets, the Head-quarters Staff again repairing to the La Nieppe château.

The Huns attacked our Ypres line all day on the 4th, but with no success. That night the evacuation of the extreme eastern section of the Salient was carried out without serious casualty.

The enemy patrols that poked through the Polygon Wood at daybreak on the 4th, and discovered the British retirement to a line further west, must indeed have been surprised.

The fighting of the previous ten days had cost the Allies over thirty square miles of ground and more than 20,000 casualties, but the British Army had undoubtedly gained in morale, nevertheless. Colonials and Territorials,

as well as old line regiments filled with new reserve men, had fought shoulder to shoulder with the veterans of Le Cateau and the Aisne, every unit gaining strength unconsciously as each contingent rose in the other's estimation. Mutual admiration and mutual confidence had welded the Army all the more closely together.

On a call at 5th Corps Headquarters at Abele, west of Poperinghe, I saw a couple of what appeared to be divers' helmets. These were loaded into a car, with a good-sized roll of rubber tubing and a homely pair of bellows attached to each of the grotesque pieces of headgear.

Curious, I asked a "Q" officer, standing near by, just how this paraphernalia was to be used.

"People get strange ideas about fighting gas," he said. "These outfits were designed and forwarded to us to be sent up front, so up front I am sending them. They are provided to allow some of our men, say about 3 in every 10,000, so far as present supply goes, to stay in the gas-filled trenches while some pals with the bellows pump good air to them through a few hundred feet of hose.

"If the gas area should be of considerable extent the chap with the bellows would soon be pumping chlorine into his fellow-Tommy, and die pumping at that, or else take to the woods and let the diver himself get what air he could find.

"Many accidents might befall the tube. A Hun might sit on it. I hate to think of myself, squatting in a trench with one of those things over my head, praying for air, with the bellows man pumping his heart out trying to get ozone through a rubber tube on top of which some fat Boche had plumped, while he potted away at one or the other of us.

"A shell, too, would have an interesting time with such a tube. Imagine the chap in the helmet hollering, 'Pump away, you lazy beggar, I'm not getting enough air to keep a flea alive,' and all the good old oxygen pouring out of a jagged hole in the bally pipe, hundreds of feet from him.

"Then, suppose a man, coming up before daylight, got his foot caught in that length of tube," he continued enthusiastically—but I realised I had started something I couldn't stop, and fled.

On May 5th I found E. F. Lumsden, of the A.S.C., an old friend with a passion for car repair of all sorts, who had charge of the lorries and motor workshops attached to the 7th Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery Ammunition Park. His lot were in Estaires. I turned my car over to them for rejuvenation while I hied myself to London to purchase an alarmingly large collection of parts with which to assist the somewhat extensive rebuilding Lumsden had gleefully planned.

I was back with a heavy load of hardware and empty purse by the night of May 7th, and by midnight on the 8th left Estaires with my chariot, which was in a greatly chastened mood.

While I was on leave in England the troopers of the 1st Cavalry Division had spent their nights in the Ypres Salient digging reserve line trenches and making barbed wire entanglements. Ypres on fire, the trench line alight with flares and the flash of constant shell-bursts, made this work more spectacular than pleasant. Once or twice a shell fell sufficiently near the troopers to wound one or two. One Black Maria unfortunately dropped

among a squadron of the 18th Hussars, killing two of them and wounding a couple of dozen more.

Lunching on the 8th with a gunners' mess on the Laventie front, I learned of a big "push" ordered at dawn on the 9th. The Auber ridge was to be attacked from the south-west by two Indian Divisions, and from the north-west by the 8th Division and the 7th Division, with the Northumbrian Territorial Division and the newly arrived West Riding Territorial Division somewhere about. Something like 120,000 men were thus to be engaged. The Canadian Division was in reserve, in addition, and the 9th Division, the first of the "K" troops to reach the Front, was expected by rail that night.

The 6th Division, in the Bois Grenier area, was ready and eager to push forward toward Lille if the Auber ridge attack proved successful.

Instructions had been given, in anticipation of any misunderstandings which might tend to lead to another fiasco like the battle of Neuve Chapelle. Orders were issued that troops in certain areas were to push on and not delay, because telephonic communication had not been

established. The order of the day asked the troops to "break a hole in the enemy's line," and assured the attacking Divisions that the whole Army was behind, ready to deal sledge-hammer blows on the broken German front.

My gunner friends confidently expected to sleep in Lille on the night of the 9th, and proceeded jocosely to mark on a map of that city the houses each one chose as his billet. Roads to Lille had been selected for the ammunition columns, and orders given which would ensure a supply of shells that far forward, in case the attack "got through."

All was excitement when I left that front in the small hours of the morning of the 9th, and greatly would I have loved to stay and see the Auber Ridge attack at daybreak. But at early morning light on Sunday, May 9th, the 1st Cavalry Division, placed under the orders of General Plumer, who had taken General Smith-Dorrien's place as the General Officer commanding the 2nd Army, was once more to be sent to Ypres.

Things had not gone well in the Salient on the 8th. The 5th Corps, then under General Allenby, who had been promoted from Cavalry

Corps, was composed of the 4th, 27th and 28th Divisions. These troops had been driven from their first-line trenches by a strenuous German attack, and had fallen back to the next line with heavy casualties.

The 2nd Cavalry Brigade had been rushed early on the 9th into the reserve trenches east of Ypres, and were in readiness from Potijze south to the Menin Road. The 1st Cavalry Brigade and the 9th Cavalry Brigade were near Vlamertinghe, west of Ypres, waiting orders.

The Huns had begun a ferocious onslaught on that perfect Sunday morning, and the roar of battle around Ypres drowned, in our ears, the noise of the 1st Army attack towards Aubers.

That 9th of May was to see bitter fighting on many fronts. The enemy attack on the Ypres Salient, and our "push" against the Auber ridge, were pregnant with bloody work, but away to the south, in front of Arras, the French Army was commencing the second day of the biggest attack it had yet planned since the winter mud had limited the fighting to trench warfare.

Five hundred thousand men and 2,000 guns were hammering at the German front, in an effort to break through to Douai, and though it was too early to expect a detailed report of the onslaught, word had come that the soldiers of France had won through in three places.

On the Russian front the German arms were crowned with success on that day, in a gigantic conflict, and the day before saw the sinking of the Lusitania and the sacrifice of its load of women and children.

One seemed to live many hours in a few minutes in those May days. All-engrossed with the work in hand, we were none the less anxious to hear of the great movements about us, in which our interests were not less keen than in the fighting in our own immediate area.

The new British line around Ypres ran from the French right, 2,000 yards east of the Yser-Ypres Canal, and about the same distance north of St. Jean, east for a mile or so to a homestead dubbed the Canadian Farm, then south-east across the Ypres-St. Julien road, and across another road that previously had served as a secondary route to Passchendaele.

From that point the trenches led south, passing to the west of Verlorenhoek, a town on the Ypres-Zonnebeke road. South again, and a little east, they crossed the Ypres-Roulers railway, skirted the western and the southern shores of the Bellewaarde Lake, took in the grounds of the ruined Hooge château and the eastern fringe of the woods that surrounded it, passed east of Hooge, and thus reached the famous Ypres-Menin road.

On went the line, winding snakelike through the eastern edge of the Sanctuary Wood, south of the Menin Road. Here the Salient reached its furthermost eastern extremity.

Then began a south-westerly trend, less than a mile in front of Zillebeke, reaching Zaartsteen before crossing the Ypres-Comines railway and later the Ypres-Comines canal.

From the canal the trenches ran more west than south to St. Eloi, then still on to the westward, until they circled south, away from Ypres, in front of Vierstraat, Kemmel and Wolverghem successively. There they faced, then passed Messines, reached the Ploegsteert Wood, crossed the River Lys and bent round Armentières, on their way through the Auber

and Neuve Chapelle area, to the Festubert and La Bassée fronts.

Early morning on that eventful Sunday found me driving General de Lisle and Hardress Lloyd to Ypres, straight through the devastated old city, out of the Menin gate, over the Menin bridge and on up the Zonnebeke Road as far as Potijze.

From the railway crossing at the western edge of Ypres, past the smashed cathedral of St. Martin, round the ruins of the Cloth Hall, through the Grande Place, and down the Rue de Menin, dead horses and men lined the way.

Ypres, which I had seen shelled so heavily time after time without its semblance of a city being destroyed, was at last indescribably in ruins. The slender pinnacles at the ends of the Cloth Hall still stood, and the tower itself had not fallen, though it had been so riddled it seemed in imminent danger of collapse. The tall torn tower of St. Martin's, near by, was also standing.

I found great difficulty in picking my way through the square, past shell-holes, piles of paving blocks, and heaps of dead horses. At one end of the Grande Place a howitzer shell

had burst directly on an artillery limber, the horses and men being piled indiscriminately together, every one instantly killed. They lay in a heap on the broken stones of the square.

Our previous brewery headquarters was levelled to the ground, and the house where we had slept when last in Ypres was smashed out of all recognition.

Shells were falling in Ypres as we went through it. Across the Menin bridge the road, once a broad highway, had been narrowed to a mere path by pile on pile of shell-strewn bricks and stones. The houses were one by one completely disappearing, as though the space they occupied was required for other purposes, and the demolition of each one of them was a preconceived part of a plan of extinction of all signs of habitation.

Dead horses in dozens along the way lay close to the wheel track. We passed an ambulance, its front portion torn away by a shell, and then the remnants of a supply wagon, smashed to matchwood.

As we sped on, as fast as the continual obstructions and deep shell-holes would allow, shells fell behind us, screeching overhead every

few seconds with strange, weird, discordant notes, culminating in a reverberating bang! that seemed thrown back at us by the high walls across the moat.

The dozens of dead horses became scores as we pushed on. Some fields by the road were literally covered with them.

A signals corps man told me that at one point his orders for dark night journeys across those fields were as follows: "Go down the hedge till you reach the ditch, turn right, and go toward the big pile of dead horses until you come to the gap in the next hedge." Those instructions could be easily followed on the blackest night, if one's olfactory nerves were in working order.

Every breath of air seemed to our unaccustomed nostrils to be charged with noisome smells.

As we approached Potijze the infantry fire grew less in volume. The Hun onslaught, the first of five distinct attacks to be pushed home by the Germans that day, had failed, and the breathing space was the more heavily punctuated by the howitzer shells for half an hour, as if in a special spleen of disappointment.

Most of the British guns had been withdrawn from the Salient and to the west of the canal. Two batteries of 18-pounders left near Potijze were firing with the valour of one hundred as we came up. But field-guns of light calibre, firing shrapnel, have less voice in an argument than the heavy howitzers with their 6-inch, 8-inch, or 14-inch high explosive shells. The Huns' howitzers on that Ypres front must have outnumbered our heavy ordnance by at least twenty to one that Sunday morning.

Long straggling strings of wounded soldiers trickled past on the Potijze road, making their way painfully around Ypres to the north-west, for to linger long on the Menin road, over which we had come, was to court sure death.

General de Lisle stopped the car not far from the Potijze château, and he and Hardress Lloyd walked through a field to the dug-out in which General Mullens had established 2nd Cavalry Brigade Headquarters.

I turned the car and backed it between two walls of what once were dwelling-houses. Sitting close to the bottom of the wall, beside the car, I counted shell intervals while waiting. From two to three shells burst near the Potijze

cross-roads every minute, but by far the greater number of Hun projectiles went on, over my head, to the Menin bridge and Ypres.

A good-sized bough from a tree above dropped on my head, and a piece of shell casing, quite hot, struck my foot as it fell, spent, beside me.

For ten minutes splinters swept the roadway continuously, and the stream of wounded ceased to pour by until the fury of the sudden bombardment had spent itself. The constant shock of concussion was nerve-racking.

After a quarter of an hour the shells fell less frequently, though odd ones struck the road at intervals.

Behind the Verlorenhoek-Hooge line was a smaller Salient, called the G.H.Q. line. It served as a support position, and between it and the canal were whole colonies of dug-outs.

Much of the G.H.Q. line was so situated that a parapet of sandbags, in full sight of the German observers, made it a frequent target. On some days during the fighting that followed the casualties in the G.H.Q. line rivalled those in the front trenches. It was never a popular

resting place, and was often the subject of much vituperation.

General de Lisle and Lloyd returned to the car, and nearer Ypres made another halt to visit the reserve dug-outs in the fields toward the St. Jean road,

"Take good cover, President," said the General, as he started across a shell-torn meadow.

Easier said than done, I thought.

The lee of a house wall sheltered an empty biscuit-tin, on which I perched, under a lean-to of rough boards. The sky showed a fairy blue through hundreds of holes in the sheet-iron roof of the rudely constructed shed, evidence that a bursting shell above had "scattered" splendidly.

In spite of shell interludes I had one or two interesting chats with passers-by. A hospital corps sergeant told me the Huns shelled the Zonnebeke road, beside which we were chatting, every time they saw a transport on it.

"They give it hell when something moves over it," he said impressively. "Just let us bring an ambulance up here in the daytime, and see them get busy, the devils."

"That's nice," said I. "Do you think they could see my car when it went up to Potijze?"

"Sure," he replied with conviction. "Sure. If they haven't shelled you yet they *will*, all right, don't *you* worry."

He left me cogitating, as he strode off whistling, evidently unaware he had put anything but comforting ideas in my head.

All those who came from "up there" agreed as to one thing—the storm of howitzer-shells made one's chance of living through a "turn in the trenches" extremely slim. Many men were undeniably demoralised by it.

"The few of my poor chaps that are left," a 28th Division subaltern told me, "seem to have the idea their number is up. They keep saying that if they don't get it to-day they'll sure get it to-morrow. Hardly any of them have much hope of getting out alive. I keep trying to hearten 'em, but it's rotten work. Every time I rip out something intended to be cheerful along comes a Jack Johnson and blows up a whole bally section of trench, burying alive those it don't kill. Then the poor beggars alongside just nod at each other and say:

'You and me next, Bill,' and what in hell *can* I tell 'em?

"Why in the deuce we don't have more guns up here *I'd* like to know. It does get sickening to be shelled, and shelled, and shelled, day and night, and hear so little of the same sort of stuff going over *their* way. Damn the German guns, anyway."

I sympathised with him, and told him so.

"I would like to see what de Lisle would do if *he* was running the guns," I told him. "He would send some hell of his own making over to those Huns if *he* was doing it, from what I have heard him say."

Odd prophetic fragment of comfort, that. Three days thereafter de Lisle was given command of the whole Verlorenhoek-Hooge front and all the artillery east of the canal, a territory which he soon had "stiff with guns." In spite of the preponderance of the Germans in heavy ordnance our gunners gave the enemy good packages of the medicine with which our hammered troops had been dosed for so many weary days.

The run back over the Menin Bridge and through Ypres safely accomplished, we visited

the headquarters of General Snow, commanding 28th Division. While waiting there a Hun howitzer shell ambled lazily over my head and exploded a couple of hundred yards beyond, throwing up a great cloud of black smoke.

"Enemy airmen spotted this little lot," said a passing "red-hat." "Warm time coming for Snow."

His anxiety was unnecessary, however, for the next shell went much further over us, and another two further still, as if searching for moving troops far behind the line.

The 3rd Cavalry Division troopers, loaded in motor-buses, went Ypres-ward during the afternoon. General Sir Julian Byng had taken Allenby's place at Cavalry Corps, and General Briggs had been given command of the 3rd Cavalry Division in Byng's place. The British Army contained no finer soldier than Briggs. This left the 1st Cavalry Brigade without a G.O.C., as General Meakin, who had been appointed to that command, was in England on sick leave. Consequently Colonel "Tommy" Pitman, of the 11th Hussars, was placed in temporary command of the 1st Brigade.

Pitman, like Briggs, was a born leader of men —a tower of strength in himself.

Once during the afternoon my work took me to Ypres, but not beyond it. A fresh attack was on, and the Boches were sweeping the Menin Bridge and the road beyond with shrapnel.

Even Macfarlane's intrepid motor-cyclists could no longer go over it with their signal corps messages; but were compelled to dismount, leave their motor-bikes in Ypres, and proceed on foot to Potijze by a roundabout route through the fields. Those cyclists generally used a road long after it had been given up as impassable by everyone else, and when they at last abandoned it as too dangerous for use it was indeed time, in their parlance, "to give it a miss."

Our 2nd Brigade troops were under intermittent shell-fire all that day, but came through with unusual good fortune. One shell lit in a group of 18th Hussars, killed five and wounded eight, but the other units escaped with extraordinarily few casualties.

At the headquarters of General Bulfin, Commanding 28th Division, Lord Loch, who

was G.S.O.1, on General Bulfin's Staff, gave us a very welcome tea.

From one of the 28th Division Staff I learned that the 4th, 27th and 28th Divisions had been through a more terrible time in the Salient than we had known. Snow's Division, the 27th, were terribly depleted in numbers. "Not many men left, and very few officers indeed," was the sober way Snow had spoken of his lot that day.

The five heavy attacks of the 9th, in spite of the battered condition of the heroic men who faced them, resulted in no real gains and the Germans suffered severe losses.

We sought eagerly for news of the British attack along the Auber ridge. Early in the morning word had come that the 8th Division had made a splendid beginning by taking the German first line trenches in front of them. In the afternoon we heard that the 4th Corps "got on" well, but the Indian Corps and 1st Corps were held up by machine-gun fire and had made no progress. A further attack was to be made at 4 p.m. on the 10th. On the 11th, the G.H.Q. information summary remarked, laconically, that there was "nothing

to report from the 1st Army Front." So the big attack, of which my gunner friends along the Fromelle Road had such hopes, had fizzled out.

Weeks afterwards I heard the full story from the lips of men who were in the front of the fighting, but our task in Ypres was growing hourly sufficiently absorbing, so that the whys and wherefores of Rawlinson's failure to break through were of less interest than the question of repelling the German attack on the Salient.

As dusk drew on the conflagrations in Ypres lit up the eastern sky. Our night headquarters were in a château not far west of the unfortunate town.

Wounded still straggled back in small groups, and ambulances arrived every few minutes at a dressing station hard by the gates of our château.

Watching those ambulances unload made me proud to be an Anglo-Saxon. The men were magnificent in their incomparable morale. Many a smiling face hid teeth set hard in pain. Many a Tommy knows not only the inestimable value of keeping a stout heart to help himself through, but the immeasurably greater treasure

of an ample store of cheery words and light-hearted jokes wherewith to lift a comrade from pain-racked despondency.

Broken bodies, broken limbs, and many a broken head were there in plenty, but one looked far to find a broken spirit.

Before we went to sleep, good news came from the French. All the way from Loos south to Lens, it said, and on through Thelus to Arras, the German first-line trenches had been captured, save in two places. On the 10th, the French reported having taken 2,000 prisoners and ten guns. In spite of all, the succeeding days' reports whittled down the final result to a tactical success, not a strategical one. The break in the German line was made good by the enemy in short order, and soon Gaul and Teuton were facing each other much as they had done, previously, and the inch-by-inch battles of the Labyrinth were soaking the ground of France's black country with French and German blood.

The big French attack and the British "push" had equally failed to smash the German line.

On our front British soldiers were to continue

to show that their line could hold as solidly as the Hun line had held to the south, in spite of the hell of howitzer-fire that was daily to be let loose in the Salient.

Rocked to sleep by the earth-tremble of bursting tons of high explosive, day-dawn on May 10th seemed to come the next moment after my head had hit the floor which served me as a pillow.

Before seven o'clock in the morning I was again in the Salient and once more under shell-fire.

Taking Colonel Home through Ypres and over the Menin bridge, we were not long in reaching Potijze.

The weather was perfect, hundreds of small birds hopping about the roadways and twittering excitedly, as if protesting to each other against the continual coming of the shells.

Behind a ruined house near the Potijze crossroads, I made a lucky discovery. Someone had built a comfy little dug-out, six feet by four and nearly three feet deep, into which I at once repaired. Its earthen walls were reinforced by heavy planks, and a roof of earth-covered timbers was edged with barrels

and sacks of bricks and mortar. Ponchos lined the inside of the walls, and the floor was deep with straw. On a shelf stood the remains of a ham bone and a tin half full of marmalade.

With thirty to forty jarring explosions in the vicinity every minute, this habitation was little short of ideal, save for the smell, which was fierce in its intensity and persistence.

The earth of the open spaces near by was thrown into yellow and brown heaps by the hundreds of howitzer shells that had rained on them for days. Dozens of dead horses, scattered about, offended the eye and polluted the air.

A detachment of troopers, bent on rendering the trenches of the near by G.H.Q. line a more safe shelter, had been spied by the Hun gunners, who for hours sent a continual shower of shells over them.

I had not waited long before I found I was not the only occupant of my shelter. My companions bit me surreptitiously, leaving red blotches which burned irritatingly.

I sat in the open air for a few moments, deciding there was not sufficient room in the dug-out for my small but persistent comrades and myself, but a big shell landed near and

sent such a spattering horde of splinters all around that I ducked back underground and took my chance with the less serious wounds of the busy little dug-out folk, who seemed half starved, in spite of the ham bone and marmalade that had been left to them.

A couple of worried, hungry mongrel dogs came nosing about fearfully, heads cocked inquisitively when they caught sight of me. I gave them the bone and was thanked by a series of tailwags from each.

A Hun shell set fire to a building not far distant, and soon immense clouds of black and saffron smoke were rolling heavenwards.

Many shells came close to where I was tucked away, one throwing a cart load of *débris* over my car, but none of them in the least disturbing the tranquillity of my snug quarters.

Returning through Ypres, we found the Menin Road and bridge had been further hammered since we had come over it. At one or two points it was almost impassable for a car. The carcass of a dead horse had been blown right across the path, so that I was compelled to pass over part of it.

Houses were smoking on all sides, and red

flames rose skyward in several quarters of the town.

A solitary old woman in black was picking her way tortuously past the dead and over the tumbled piles of brick and stone. She was, we thought, the last survivor of the civil population.

General Adeney, of the 12th Brigade, called at 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters and told me of the heavy shelling on the front that his brigade had held. The signal wire from his headquarters to that of his Division was cut by shell-fire fifty-five times in one day. His men had gone through a terrible time, but had stood it magnificently. General Adeney had wide experience with the Hun gas, and assured us its effects could be greatly nullified if care was taken to follow out the instructions as to the use of the respirators and face-masks, which had been issued to each man whose duty took him into the Salient.

The 2nd Cavalry Brigade went from the G.H.Q. line to the front position during the evening, but were relieved by the 1st Cavalry Brigade before the next morning. The 1st Brigade spent the day in dug-outs in a

little wood near the Ypres-Roulers Railway, close to the trenches. Shell-fire had cost the 2nd Brigade thirteen killed and fifty-four wounded during its occupancy of the G.H.Q. line.

The 9th Cavalry Brigade reported itself "quite comfortable" in splendid dug-outs near Wieltje, but the shells wounded four of its officers and eighteen of its men, nevertheless.

From the windows of our headquarters château the fires of Ypres could be seen burning brightly all night, a red splash on the inky black of the horizon. Bursting shells and the flash of our guns never ceased. Bright stars dotted the dark canopy overhead, and brilliant trench-flares rose and fell in graceful arcs. The wonderful, ever-changing sight and the continual diapason of the heavy explosives was awe-inspiring.

Early morning usually came with a lull in the gun-fire on both sides, unless an attack was in progress. We hurried through breakfast on the 11th, and lost no time in getting away for Potijze.

General de Lisle, Major "Bertie" Fisher, of the 17th Lancers, who had joined de Lisle's

Staff as G.S.O. 2 (in place of Major Fitzgerald, promoted to G.S.O. 1 of the 2nd Cavalry Division), and Captain Hardress Lloyd were my passengers.

The rumph! r-r-rumph! of itinerant Black Marias told us that German hate still held against shattered Ypres. As we approached the town one or two heavy explosions were followed by a cloud of dust and smoke where the shells had fallen on a building already a heap of *débris* and scattered its remains high in the air.

At the railway crossing west of Ypres several newly made shell-chasms made me pick my path warily. All the way to the Grande Place shell-holes and gathering piles of rubbish and timbers made progress difficult.

The space in front of the cathedral was knee-deep in loose paving blocks and stones.

As we turned the corner of the Cloth Hall, and could see the battered square, our sight was arrested by brilliant sheets of scarlet flame edged black, that shot across the Rue de Menin ahead of us.

The bright morning sun and blue, cloudless sky above, the grey and white ruins on every

hand, and the blood-red, leaping, straining, struggling patch of angry flame that roared in our faces as we drew near to it, made a picture that would have delighted the heart of an artist.

I stopped the car.

The General at first counselled rushing through the fire, but I dreaded the result. Even should we have dashed past unscathed, the thought of the petrol in the car made me hesitate.

Then, beyond the conflagration, we saw that a house at the western approach to the Menin bridge had been knocked over by a shell, and so fallen that it completely blocked the road. Half a hundred men must work for hours before the Menin bridge would once more be open for traffic, though fortunately the bridge itself was undamaged.

Reversing the car and regaining the Grande Place, I threaded my way past deep holes in the *pavé*, and cautiously clambered over piles of *débris* as we sought another route eastward. Along a street where desolation reigned supreme we went, until we reached the eastern moat wall. Turning north, we sought an outlet on the St. Jean road.

Pushing over great fallen timbers, nail-studded and threatening a puncture at every revolution of the wheels, over, by and into holes in the paved road, it seemed impossible the car could surmount and pass the mounds of wreckage and paving-blocks that filled the way.

Over the railway we crawled, and to the very northern edge of Ypres. Just as we were congratulating ourselves on having won through, in spite of apparently insurmountable difficulties, a monster shell-cavity, thirty feet in diameter, and so deep as to be absolutely impassable for the car, opened in front of us.

The road was wide, but the shell had fallen in its centre, heaping the earth and stone at the edges of the gaping crater until it blocked the street from side to side.

General de Lisle and his two companions dismounted and proceeded on foot, instructing me to "be careful and get home safely."

Heading the way I had come was a task of some magnitude. Pneumatic tyres were not made to traverse shell-torn roads covered with glass, nails, and sharp bits of iron and stone, but my trusty Dunlops did not fail me.

In the square I stopped to get a photograph of a fire that was enveloping the houses at the back of the cathedral. Every building in the district was burning, some smouldering and smoking threateningly, while the flames raged fiercely from top to bottom of others standing near.

As I pulled up, a fearful crash came from the Menin bridge not far behind me, the shock of the concussion almost throwing me down. Giving up all idea of procuring pictures under such circumstances, I ignominiously fled as fast as it was safe to go.

Passing the cathedral, I saw a fine collie dog, his tail between his legs, slinking along furtively. I called him, dismounting from the car and trying to induce him to come to me, but he was scared so badly he only ran the faster at my approach.

In the western edge of Ypres a worn, drawn-faced Belgian, with a hunted look in his eyes, was slowly and carefully shoving a wheel-barrow, on which was a rude pallet. Stretched upon it lay the wasted form of a frail woman, close-swathed in as much bedding as the method of conveyance would allow. Her skin

was wax-white, her wide eyes large and lustrous. She had not sufficient strength to prevent her feet from trailing the ground. An aged crone shuffled beside the sick woman, on her face a picture of agonised fear painful to see.

Big Hun guns were searching for little British ones not far away, and at every detonation the poor old woman jumped nervously.

An offer of assistance met with no response, as if they were past all capability of communication. The horrors they must have gone through for weeks in some cellar in that stricken town baffle imagination.

They were undoubtedly the last of the residents of Ypres to leave the town alive. If others remained, it was but to be buried under the falling walls of their hiding places, or to meet a worse fate in the flames that were raging from one end of the city to the other.

Vlamertinghe received a sharp shelling that forenoon, and a few minutes afterward I took General de Lisle through the town to the headquarters of General Wilson of the 4th Division. As we ran through Vlamertinghe, Tommies were busy sweeping the roadway

clear of *débris* thrown about by the shells five minutes before.

When at General Bulfin's Headquarters *estaminet* a quarter of an hour later, I saw Hun shrapnel again begin bursting in twos over Vlamertinghe, which was gradually becoming an unhealthy locality.

The clear air brought out dozens of aeroplanes, which kept the anti-aircraft guns busy. The Germans sent up a couple of weird "sausages"—anchored observation balloons of peculiar shape.

The amount of ammunition used in the continuous shelling of the trench line was stupendous.

On one run toward Ypres I passed the "Princess Pat's" (Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry), fresh from the 27th Division trenches, and on their way to a rest in billets. They were indeed a sturdy lot. All forenoon the Huns shelled our front line from the Menin Road to the north as it passed the Hooge Château and circled the Bellewaarde Lake. Wounded men poured back through Ypres from the Front, marvelling that they had escaped death in the trenches, and wondering

Dragoon Guards resting in the huts near Vlamertinghe

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Graves of Captain Annesley, Lieutenant Drake and Captain Peto, all of the 10th Hussars, in a graveyard on the Menin Road

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still more that they had not been blown to atoms as they trudged back along the deadly Menin Road.

A wounded trooper of the 11th Hussars reported his regiment unpleasantly situated in bad dug-outs in a wood, between the Ypres-Roulers Railway and the Bellewaarde Lake. The dug-outs were not of sufficient size to accommodate the whole of the 11th, and when a detachment of Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders claimed shelter therein as well, the congestion became dangerous. The Hun shells burst immediately over the dug-outs, and some casualties had occurred before morning dawned. So little accommodation seemed available that one squadron of the 11th had been sent back to the G.H.Q. line, where it had been badly hammered by howitzer fire for hour after hour as the morning passed.

Romer Williams and I walked from our château to a "Mother" gun, concealed under a screen of dry branches in a near-by farmyard. The big 9·2 howitzer was throwing its 290-pound projectiles, filled with lyddite, into the Hun trenches in front of Hooge, nearly 9,000 yards distant. The five-mile journey was

accomplished by each shell in 35 seconds, a rate of more than 500 miles per hour. Dodging a shell which was coming at such speed would be something of a feat.

Yet, standing directly behind the breech, we could distinctly see the 9·2 shell as it left the muzzle and started on its sinister errand.

For so huge an engine of war its paraphernalia was simple. The howitzer stood on a platform built into the farmyard. Rows of shells, each a load for four men, lay in a ditch behind it. On a log, under a tall tree, sat the captain gunner, by his side a non-com. busy figuring out mathematical equations, and another poring over a large-scale map. With his back to the tree crouched a Royal Flying Corps man, his receiver to his ear, and an elaborate box of wireless telegraphic tricks beside him. Across the road a slender pole, a score of feet in height, completed his wireless installation.

"Fire!" said the captain, sharply.

Flash! bang! "Mother" recoiled with a shock and returned leisurely. Not a big noise or a very trying one on the ears of those near by, unless in front of the "business end."

The crew stood close at hand as each round was fired.

Before an unsophisticated onlooker would imagine the great shell had reached its destination, the wireless man, listening attentively to the message from an aeroplane observer high over the Huns, and out of our sight, sang out "150 yards over."

A cabalistic sequence of numbers was shouted in staccato tones by one of the non-coms, repeated by a man at the breech, and flash! bang! went "Mother" again.

"Well placed. Right into them," said the wireless operator, as the approving message was ticked from his fellow in the 'plane.

Flash! bang! the work went on, comforting the battered men in our own trenches, and harrying the Germans in theirs.

"Had nine direct hits on their trenches yesterday," said the captain gunner, "and have got the range pretty well to-day. Managed to get a couple into one of the German batteries this morning, too." And he grinned.

If the men who made the shells could have known how much heart every 9·2 projectile put into the brave boys that faced the Hun

trenches, weary to distraction of everlasting German shelling, and little return thereto, they would have been justly proud of their handiwork.

A "Mother" shell was a fine tonic for those who were behind it, "when it popped."

On the night of the 11th the 1st and 9th Brigades "took over" the parts of the line held by the 27th Division and most of that held by the 28th. Up to that time the troopers had been only in reserve or support, yet so heavy was the Hun gun-fire in the Salient that our Division had lost one officer killed and seventeen wounded, and the casualty list among the men was but few short of one hundred.

De Lisle was given command of a stretch of line reaching from near the Bellewaarde Lake to the Wieltje-St. Julien road, and 2,500 28th Division men and all the guns east of the Yser-Ypres Canal were placed under him. He at once planned to throw several additional batteries into the Salient, and gave orders which would result in a shell-surprise for the Huns. Every time the German gunners started to shell our trenches, the German trenches were to be deluged with a half 'an

hour of concentrated shell-fire from all de Lisle's field batteries, his 6-inch howitzer battery, and the single 60-pounder gun that had been allotted to him.

The day closed with the repulse of the last of three sanguine enemy attacks that had been launched since morning, two of which had gained a foothold in the British line, only to have it, in each case, torn from their grasp by costly counter-attacks.

The Ypres-Poperinghe road was filled with troops marching westward. "To what lot do these men belong?" I asked General Mullens, as we stood watching the passing columns.

"They are of the Northumberland Brigade," said Mullens. "I am told that but 900 of them are left out of more than 5,000. Another Brigade went into the Salient 5,500 strong a fortnight ago, and has come out to-day numbering but 950."

I went to bed by the bright light of burning Ypres, which made every tree cast flickering shadows to try the nerves of the men who tramped up in the cold darkness to share the morrow's battle, or trudged back to billets to sink into the torpor of extreme exhaustion,

until in their turn they should again face the shattering shell blasts.

May 12th was comparatively a quiet day. The wind had changed, and Hun gas attacks were impossible until it again swung round to the east.

I told Captain Francis Grenfell, of the 9th Lancers, about the "Mother" gun not far away, and we strolled down where it was quartered just in time to watch it fire a score of rounds at a German battery which was in action at the bend of the Ypres-Comines Canal near Hollebeke.

A second 9·2 gun had arrived in the night and taken up quarters in an adjoining farm. It had been doing good work near Brielen, but was "spotted" by a German air-scout and "found" by the enemy's guns. One man killed and several wounded by a German shell decided the gunner in command to "make a get-away" from the discovered position.

The 3rd Cavalry Division troops were put under de Lisle's command in addition to those of his own Division and the odd brigades of the 28th Division.

A slice of trench taken by the Huns on the

Officers of the Cavalry Corps

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A typical farm in Flanders, in which British soldiers were billeted

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11th, and retaken by a British counter-attack that night, was rushed by the enemy on the morning of the 12th and captured, only to have another British counter-attack prepared for the evening. Thus the line of battle surged forward and backward day after day, each section of trench being fought over time and again with heavy losses to both sides.

Slowly the German circle was drawing closer to the stricken town. The second battle of Ypres was in full swing.

At lunch time General Allenby and his Chief of Staff were guests of our mess. It was a source of great satisfaction that the cavalry, on the threshold of one of the hardest struggles it had been called upon to face, should be under a Corps Commander who had so long been at its head as the G.O.C. of the Cavalry Corps. No man that I saw in the months I was with the British Expeditionary Force inspired more confidence in his leadership than Allenby.

General Meakin arrived from England, but decided that the command of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, to which he had been assigned, had best be left in the hands of "Tommy" Pitman

until its turn in the front trenches was done. Pitman knew the ground and had a wonderful grasp of the situation, and to no other one man was due more of the credit for the holding of the line during the ensuing forty-eight hours.

On the night of the 12th, the tired infantry of the 28th Division was given relief from the firing-line, and before dawn the two and a half miles of front trenches, from the Canadian Farm, north of the Ypres-St. Julien Road, south to the western shore of the Bellewaard Lake, a few yards from the Ypres-Menin Road at Hooge, was manned by the dismounted troopers of the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions.

The 2nd Cavalry Brigade held the extreme left of this stretch of cavalry line. The 18th Hussars were furthest north, the 4th Dragoon Guards in the centre, and the 9th Lancers on right. South of them were the three regiments of the 1st Cavalry Brigade—5th Dragoon Guards, 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays), and 11th Hussars. The 5th Dragoon Guards were on the left of the Queen's Bays, whose right rested on the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road near Verlorenhoek, a thousand yards from Potijze, where de Lisle so often took me each

day. The 11th Hussars were in some trenches near the grounds of the Potijze Château, The 9th Cavalry Brigade was in dug-outs near Wieltje.

South of the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road came the 3rd Cavalry Division front; the 7th Brigade first, then the 6th Brigade, the 8th Brigade being in reserve.

Of the 7th Brigade, the 1st Life Guards formed the left, their trenches leading south from the Zonnebeke Road. One of their squadrons was in a reserve trench at the back of the line. Next on the right came the 2nd Life Guards, then the Leicestershire Yeomanry, whose right rested on the Ypres-Roulers Railway.

The 6th Brigade held the line from the railway to the Bellewarde Lake, the 3rd Dragoons on the left, the North Somerset Yeomanry on the right, and the 1st Royal Dragoons (Royals) in reserve a bit to the rear, and but a few yards north of the Menin road.

The 8th Brigade, in reserve, was composed of the Royal Horse Guards (Blues), the 10th Hussars, and the Essex Yeomanry.

Each cavalry regiment had a fighting strength

of about 300 men. The 1st Division numbered some 2,400 rifles, and the 3rd Division roughly 2,700, say, just over 5,000 men for the two Divisions. An extra number of machine-guns made up for their comparatively small numerical strength.

The trench-line into which the troopers were thrown that night was in poor condition for defence. A foot of mud was the average bottom, and further attempts at digging only resulted in more water and mud. Parapets of sandbags and wire entanglements were sadly needed all along the line, and, at that, sandbag parapets were all too easily demolished by Hun shell-fire, which made short work of them.

A careful reconnaissance of the 3rd Cavalry Division trenches failed to reveal a stretch of 100 yards where more sandbags and more wire were not urgently required.

CHAPTER VI.

DAWN on the 13th of May was the signal for a howitzer bombardment of the cavalry front which surpassed in intensity and duration any previous gun-fire during the whole War.

From four o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon it drifted from one section to another, without respite. During the entire forenoon the trench line north and south of the Zonnebeke Road, viewed from Potijze, a thousand yards to the rear, was covered continuously with a heavy pall of smoke, as if a well-fed conflagration was raging beneath. The flashes of bursting shells in that smoke-cloud were so numerous that no human eye could follow or count them, even in a most restricted range of vision.

The sound was one grand, incessant roar. All the thunderstorms of time, crashing in splendid unison, would not have made a more magnificent din. The ear could not intelligibly record so tempestuous a maelstrom of sound-

waves, and the brains of those in the midst of its wildest fury became numb and indifferent to the saturnalia of explosion, save for one here and there which lost its mental balance, perhaps never to be regained.

Early in the morning General de Lisle sent me to Potijze with Captain Hardress Lloyd. General Meakin rode up with us on his first visit to the Salient since his return from sick leave.

Ypres was impassable. We took a round-about course to the north, now dashing down a muddy lane, now over a turnip field where constantly passing traffic had worn a sort of path, over an improvised bridge across the canal, at last reaching the Ypres-St. Jean Road that led away to Wieltje and St. Julien. By a cross road of sorts we found our way to Potijze, thankful to have arrived safely.

Before we had traversed much of the way from our headquarters, west of Ypres, we were in a bad shell-zone. On the narrow road, ammunition limbers went up at a trot and returned at full gallop. The route was lined with red-bandaged wounded struggling rearward as best they could, and ambulances were always in evidence. As we turned a corner a

Black Maria exploded with a fearful bang fifty yards ahead, right beside the roadway. A small piece of the shell hit General Meakin in the head, but luckily was so spent it did not cause a wound.

As we neared the canal blue ruin was spread everywhere. Battery on battery of our artillery, firing like mad, barked and roared from the fields at our sides, while Hun shells fell close and fast around them.

A car dashed towards us, the chauffeur holding up his hand to stop us. It was "Babe" Nicholson's car, empty except for the driver, whom Nicholson had told to "look out for himself," while "Babe" was showing the way trenchwards to a depleted battalion of York and Durham Territorials sent forward as reserve. Only 380 of their 1,000 remained from the fortnight's fighting and sixteen of their officers had been killed or wounded, but they trudged up as if arriving fresh from home.

"Stop, sir," said the scared chauffeur. "They are shelling the road beyond so heavily no one can get through."

"Did you just come through?" asked Hardress Lloyd.

"Yes," replied the boy; "but a couple

almost lit on me. One of them blew the car into the hedge."

"Go ahead, President," said Lloyd grimly. "We have got to get there somehow."

We got there, somehow.

Once we ran through the ill-smelling shell-cloud of a coal-box that burst a few yards in front of us, and twigs from the trees fell over the car as the shells screamed above, but we dodged on, past shell-holes and around barricades, untouched.

Pulling up, I saw Nicholson's car behind us, the driver grinning.

"I thought if it was good enough for you it was good enough for me," he said. "But I'm hanged if I thought *anyone* could get over that road and not be hit. It's the first time I've been up here."

I introduced him to my tiny Potijze dug-out, which he thought "smelled horrid." He was inclined to a preference for the open air until a great howitzer-shell lit fifty feet away, pieces from it knocking over some of the wall of the ruined house behind which the dug-out had been made. As he joined me in the cramped space below ground another Black Maria burst across the road from us, making the earth

tremble and showering splinters on the roof of our shelter.

Fortunately for those whose work took them over the roads that morning the sky was leaden and rain fell at intervals, rendering German aeroplane observation impossible. Had a Hun airman caught sight of the traffic-filled road over which we had come the enemy gunners might have effectually closed it to traffic.

As we waited at Potijze the shells from the British guns behind us seemed to fill the air. Gradually the fire of the German howitzers concentrated on the trench-line in front of us, and the Boche gunners burst shrapnel all about the fields, searching erratically for the English batteries.

Budworth, of the artillery, was very much upset that morning by the target selected by one of the British howitzers.

Our divisional batteries H, I, and the Warwickshire Territorial Battery, were doing fine work and splendid execution.

Budworth's observers sent back word that some of our heavy guns were shelling a farm that he had instructed should not be shelled by his batteries.

Instantly he sent to the howitzer commander and asked him to "Please get off that farm."

"What's wrong with it?" asked the howitzer man. "It's in German hands, right enough."

"Of course it is," said Budworth. "But I've figured out that the Hun Artillery Commander would have his headquarters about there; very probably in that very farm. The old chap is peppering my batteries with shrapnel, which don't bother us, for we just get in our funk-holes and wait until it's all over, then run out and bang away. For that matter we don't even go in for it, if we are busy. If the old Boche chap who is running their guns should be killed by one of your big shells, and another German beggar, who decided to use high explosives on us, should take his place, we couldn't stay here long. Whatever you do, don't bother the old German gunner-chap. He is quite all right, from our standpoint, where he is at present."

Budworth's theory was proven sound by the fact that out of his three batteries of field guns he only lost eleven men and ten horses in a fortnight of fighting.

Standing in the Zonnebeke Road and looking toward Verlorenhoek, the shell-swept front line

was plainly visible, a little more than half a mile away.

To reconstruct a fight on a two-and-a-half mile front such as the battle of May 13th, with official regimental reports to which to refer, would be sufficiently difficult. To piece it out while it was actually in progress was increasingly so.

I ran back and forth from our headquarters west of Ypres to the town of Potijze many times that day. By evening, when I left the Salient for the night, I had met with scores who had terrible tales to tell. The wounded made an unending stream westwards, and numbered many a familiar face.

Officers and men all declared the shell-fire was the heaviest they had seen. At no point in the line was the German shelling more fierce than on either side the Zonnebeke Road, near Verlorenhoek. The Queen's Bays were to the north of it, the 5th D.G.'s on their left. On the south of the road were the 1st Life Guards, and on their right the 2nd Life Guards, then the Leicestershire Yeomanry.

The Bays, under Lieutenant-Colonel "Algy" Lawson, formerly of the Greys, held on like grim death in spite of the storm of shell that

burst over them at four o'clock in the morning and continued hour after hour throughout the day.

The Life Guards were driven back from their trenches with heavy losses, and the Leicestershire Yeomanry had to fall back as well.

This exposed the right flank of the Bays, but still they stuck to their position.

At about half past ten o'clock the commanding officer of the 5th D.G.'s ordered the retirement of his regiment, the men trickling back in two thin lines, one at either end of their section of front.

This resulted in the left of the Bays being uncovered as well as their right, but they put their teeth in and held on. The 11th Hussars came up magnificently on the left shortly after, and shared the glory, with the Bays, of saving the line.

Twice during the day the Huns formed for an infantry attack in front of the Bays, and each time our splendid guns were told of the concentration, and poured shell into the massing Germans with terrible execution, scattering the enemy detachments like chaff before the wind, and thus nipping the attack in the bud.

A strong enemy detachment came down the Zonnebeke Road and deployed to the north of it, immediately in front of the Bays. The Boches were lying in the open, but were protected from our rifle and machine-gun fire by a swell of ground.

A fat German observation officer obtained a place of vantage in a shattered farmhouse just south of the road. No amount of sniping could dislodge him, though the bullets chipped off bits of brick from the slender stack behind which he was sheltered. Up came a Naval Division armoured Rolls-Royce. Opposite the end of the Bays' trenches it stopped and opened fire.

The Hun officer in the farm noted the approach of the car, and fled up the road as fast as he could run.

"I had to laugh so much at the funny figure the little fat chap cut, with the tails of his long grey coat flapping straight out behind him as he ran," said one of the Bays to me that night. "I swear it did in any chance I had of hitting him. He got back to his own lot safe, I think, but he did made a holy show of himself doing it."

A large number of the enemy were seen

concentrating in a wood in front of the Bays toward evening, and again word to our gunners was followed by a bombardment of the group of trees that made immediate evacuation of it the only alternative to sure death.

On the extreme left of the cavalry line, the 18th Hussars suffered more heavily than the other regiments of the 2nd Brigade, though the 9th Lancers had many casualties.

The trenches occupied by the 18th Hussars were blown to bits. Some of the regiment retired to the left into the adjacent trenches of the East Lancashire, and some went back over the open ground in search of the reserve trenches. Failing to find them, the troopers advanced to the ruins of their own line and dug themselves in as best they could, only to be blown out of some parts of the trenches a second time.

The Hospital Corps men could not reach the 18th wounded, as the Huns had a machine-gun trained on the only approach to the trenches. Consequently many men, unable to be moved to a place of safety, were killed as they lay wounded in trench or dug-out.

The right of the cavalry line, from the Ypres-Roulers Railway toward the Menin Road, was in very soft ground.

The 3rd Dragoon Guards, North Somerset Yeomanry, and Royals, of General David Campbell's 6th Brigade, were literally picked up and thrown back by the howitzer shells, while the line was simply blotted out of existence.

The Royals, in reserve, made a charge at 7.30 in the morning that took them to the place where the original trenches had been, but all that remained of them, even at that early hour, were great tumbled piles of earth and mud without semblance of form.

Cecil Howard, Campbell's Brigade Major, was the only officer on the 6th Brigade Staff who was not hit, Campbell himself being slightly wounded.

The most spectacular manœuvre of the day fell to the lot of Bulkeley Johnson's 8th Brigade, who were taken from reserve to counter-attack at 2.30 p.m. and win back the part of the line out of which Kennedy's 7th Brigade, the 1st and 2nd Life Guards, and the Leicestershire Yeomanry had been shelled.

The area to be won back reached from the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road to the Ypres-Roulers Railway. On the left of it the gallant Bays had stuck to their trenches On the right of

it, David Campbell's men were holding on, though frightfully decimated; their left, resting on the railway, bent back slightly by the retirement of the 7th Brigade.

The British artillery opened the 2.30 attack in splendid style. Then up went the 8th Brigade, Blues, 10th Hussars, and Essex Yeomanry.

It made the pulses beat high to hear the story of that charge from the Bays, who had reserved seats for the show.

The lines swept forward with a cheer that was drowned in the crashing of the shells. The Blues reached the line of shell-holes that marked the position of the Life Guards' trenches. No cover was to be found. So on they went, a few of them actually penetrating the German trenches 400 yards beyond, but soon realizing that their numbers were insufficient to maintain their position, and slowly coming back with what was left of their regiment. The 10th Hussars went up invincibly, men dropping at every step. One big trooper was seen advancing some distance ahead of his comrades, those who had been in line with him at the start all down. He stalked along coolly, without waiting for the others. The big trooper made a gallant showing, standing for a moment

and firing steadily, then tramping on, to stop and fire again. No one dreamed he would reach the Hun trenches alive, but he did so, and was the first of the 10th Hussars to disappear over the enemy's parapet.

Had the Germans stuck to their trenches the few of the 10th to reach them might easily have been wiped out. But the Teuton soldiers fled before that stern advance.

Like the Blues, the 10th Hussars were too few to be able to consolidate the small portion of enemy trench which they had won, so nothing remained but a retirement.

Back they came, the Hun supports quickly taking advantage of their withdrawal. Two armoured cars pushed beyond the Bays' trench, up the Zonnebeke Road, and poured a heavy machine-gun fire across the rear of the retreating 10th Hussars' line. Few of that regiment would have returned had this covering fire not protected their retirement.

Once a group of troopers took a few dozen German prisoners, but the captured Huns were nearly all killed by German shell-fire before they could be taken to a place of safety. No trenches existed in that area into which to put them, and English and German, captors and

prisoners alike, were mowed down by Hun shrapnel as they crossed the fields towards Potijze.

Months after that memorable battle, I had sent to me by a friend, a distinguished officer in the 11th Hussars, some leaves from his War diary. His account of the operations of his regiment that day read as follows :—

"Thursday, May 13th.—At about four a.m. a terrific bombardment began against our front line trenches. The fire was most intense, and heavier even than at Messines. At 7.30 a.m. Brigade Headquarters received a message from the 5th D.G.'s, saying that a great deal of their trenches had been blown in, and that their position was critical. The troops of C Squadron, 11th Hussars, under Norrie, were ordered up to support them. There was no communication trench to the front line, but by clever use of the ground they reached the 5th D.G.'s with very few casualties. The bombardment still increased. The Bays were holding on as well, but asked for more ammunition. A party from Renton's troop succeeded in getting some up, but had several killed in doing so. About 12 o'clock a regiment of the 3rd Cavalry Division, on the right of the Bays,

were shelled out of their trenches, and the Germans succeeded in getting a footing in them. General Briggs ordered a counter-attack, which was launched at 2.30 p.m. Renton, who had been twice up to the front line to get information for the Brigadier, volunteered to lead the 10th Hussars up to the Bays' right, where they were to commence their attack. The whole affair was carried out like an Aldershot parade movement. The men screamed at the top of their voices, the officers making hunting noises, as they all charged across the open. It was a glorious sight. The Germans ran as if the devil himself was after them, our guns pouring shrapnel into them. The trenches were retaken, but in the excitement the attackers rushed on another half a mile.

"The Germans then turned on all their artillery, killing their own men as well as ours. Confusion followed, and the attacking line, being broken up, withdrew about half a mile. It was a pity they ever went beyond their original line, as the casualties were heavy.

"To return to our own section of the line. The 5th D.G.'s reported that they had put Norrie's troop into their front line, keeping the

other troop (Sergeant Lemon) in a support trench. Their casualties had been heavy, and the situation extremely critical. During the afternoon information came in that the whole of the 5th D.G.'s had been shelled out of their trenches, and were retiring. Shortly after this Lance-Corporal Watts came back from the front line with a message from Norrie, explaining the situation. He had held on with his troop when the 5th D.G.'s retired, and besides his own men had a troop of the 5th and one of their machine-guns, and was covering the left flank of the Bays—a grand piece of work. The line had to be held at all cost, so the 11th Hussars were ordered to advance and retake the lost trenches. Lawson's Squadron (A) was sent in advance, with instructions to work up behind the Bays, and push in on their left. Later, another message came in to say that a squadron of the 19th Hussars, under Tremayne, had pushed up to Norrie and had been put on his left; however, there still existed a considerable gap of unoccupied trench. Divine Providence must have come to our aid, as the shelling practically stopped as the regiment advanced. Soon after 6 p.m. Brigade Headquarters heard that Lawson had successfully

got his squadron up to the front line. B Squadron, Stewart Richardson, followed on, and by dusk the line was re-established.

"Our casualties for the day were about fifty, the Bays had the same, and the 5th D.G.'s had over one hundred, a large number of which, however, occurred during the retirement. As the sun was setting the battle died down. It had been a nerve-straining day, full of gallant episodes."

Wires cut, messengers killed, and the inevitable and exaggerated and mistaken reports of the wounded, made the long day of fighting an anxious one at de Lisle's headquarters.

The day's casualties in the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions were thought, until well into the following day, to exceed fifty per cent. of the men engaged.

Early in the forenoon came word that "Hardly any of the 3rd D.G.'s and the North Somerset Yeomanry are left." At midday Colonel Burnett and Major Corbett, of the 18th Hussars, were reported killed, but two or three hours later we learned the news, while unfortunately true as to Major Corbett, was incorrect as to Burnett, who was sound and well.

At 4 p.m. General de Lisle sent me to Colonel Browne, the Chief Medical Officer of the 1st Cavalry Division, to ascertain what was actually known as to officer casualties in the Division.

Colonel Browne said: "We cannot get the ambulances up yet to evacuate the wounded, the shell-fire so covers the roads. Thus far but eight of our wounded officers have been brought back."

Among the eight was Major Sewell, of the 4th D.G.'s. The 9th Lancers, Sewell thought, had suffered from the shell-fire even more heavily than the 18th Hussars.

As I was about to leave Potijze, at seven o'clock that night, a staff officer reported that General Kennedy had just told him but ninety men were left to him out of his fine 7th Brigade, and he greatly feared that a large proportion, if not all, of the missing were killed or wounded.

General Briggs, at Potijze, received report after report of heavy losses from the various 3rd Cavalry Division units, as dark drew on, until it seemed that the Division had been practically wiped out. But 200 men were reported to be left to Campbell of the

6th Brigade. Kennedy's 7th Brigade mustered 120 at the close of the day, and Bulkeley Johnson's 8th Brigade was so shattered that to obtain an estimate of its numbers was most difficult.

In spite of the fact that the 6th, 7th, and 8th Brigades had, according to all military theory, ceased to exist as fighting forces, their remnants were gathered together as best the darkness of the night allowed, and put hard at work "digging themselves in," in preparation for the fight that the morning light would be sure to bring them.

The Northumberland Territorial Brigade, its numbers raised to 1,200, was sent up to help the tired troopers dig. Their General, Fielding, an old Aisne acquaintance, lunched with us that day. He had just taken over their command, as their former Brigadier had been killed a fortnight before in the Salient. The transformation of that lot of Terriers from raw, untried troops to veterans of shell-warfare had not taken many days.

Captain Johnson, a French liaison officer who had been attached to General Briggs' staff since Mons, and who had won the respect and deep affection of all with whom he came into

contact, was shot through the head and instantly killed that night as he was accompanying General Briggs on a tour of the trenches in front of Potijze.

Wilson's 4th Division, on the left of the 1st Cavalry Division, which had also suffered heavily on the 13th, had sent a message asking the cavalry to take over some of its line, but that night it found it possible to occupy a few hundred yards of the line held by the 18th Hussars. This proved a most welcome assistance. The right of the 3rd Cavalry Division front, from the Ypres-Roulers Railway to the Menin Road, was given into the hands of the Irish Fusiliers, of the 27th Division.

The line, thus shortened slightly, was the scene of feverish work all night long, that the importance of the small German gain might be minimised, and a further Hun advance blocked.

The actual ground gained by the Germans on May 13th was but 300 to 400 yards on a front of 1,000 yards. Our new line from the Zonnebeke Road across the Ypres-Roulers railway was in better terrain than the old position, and offered superior natural advantages for defence to the deplorable original line.

So we were far from disheartened when day broke on May 14th.

The German heavy guns had seemed at times during the 13th to number scores on scores. Though fire came from every direction into the badly placed and rottenly made British trenches, blowing our thin line sky-high all along the front, the net result of advantage to the enemy was extremely small.

On the morning of the 14th de Lisle said to me: "Bad as our losses have been, I have the situation in hand. The men have held the line, and will continue to do so. Every hour sees things get better."

The shattered, depleted, almost anihilated regiments of the day before were found by the grey light of that cold, rainy May morning to be fighting forces still, their moral undamaged, and their spirits undimmed.

By half past six o'clock I was off for Potijze with de Lisle, a heavy rain during the night having covered the road with slimy mud and made it terribly slippery. We found Hun gunners so docile that I could with impunity run the general to the G.H.Q. line on the Potijze road.

As I waited in the roadway two of the Blues

came past. Mud-covered and battle-stained, they slouched along as if completely tired out.

"Good morning," I called out, cheerily.

"Good morning, sir," they answered, straightening, instinctively, as they spoke. Fine chaps they were, and soldierly from head to foot, in spite of the mantle of dirt in which they were wrapped.

Nerves and muscles relaxed, almost at the limit of endurance, steeped in physical fatigue, like a flash they could pull up, eyes clear, heads erect, voices firm, the look on their faces showing that they were just as good fighting men at that moment as they were thirty-six hours previously.

Over the smoke of welcome cigarettes we chatted of the charge of the day before. The rushing of the German trenches, the capture of a section of them, and then being overpowered and turned out by overwhelming numbers of Huns, was gone over, spiritedly, by the troopers.

"Only seventy of the Blues are left, though," said one of them. "That's the hard part of it."

"You are sure to find more when things get straightened out," I replied. "Casualty lists

always grow smaller when the returns are all in."

They trudged on soberly, "Hoping so." Splendid men.

I was sent to search the houses in Potijze, or what was left of them, for a couple of wounded officers who were reported to be waiting to be evacuated by an ambulance that had not yet arrived.

An Essex Yeomanry trooper limped slowly passed as I started, and I gave him a "lift" for a few hundred yards. He had badly sprained his knee during the charge the day before. By morning it had become so swollen and painful he could only hobble along with great difficulty. No thought of coming back to have it attended to, after the charge, had entered his mind.

"We were told to hang on till dark," he explained, "and it took all of us that were left to hang on. I couldn't have come back very well, could I?"

Before the day was over some of the official casualty lists of the brigades were compiled, and we were greatly cheered to find the losses were less heavy than had at first been reported.

The 1st Cavalry Division casualties for

May 13th numbered 523. In the 1st Cavalry Brigade two officers were killed and five wounded, and 164 troopers killed or wounded. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade had a casualty list of 249. Three officers in the brigade were killed and eleven wounded. Among the killed was Lieutenant Lunan, a very brave medical officer attached to the 9th Lancers. The 18th Hussars lost 160, the 9th Lancers 140, and the 4th D.G.'s thirty-five.

The 3rd Cavalry Division suffered more heavily. David Campbell's 6th Brigade had eleven officers killed and twenty-two wounded—thirty-three out of a total of forty-nine. In the ranks, the Royals lost 117, the North Somerset Yeomanry 105, and the 3rd Dragoon Guards sixty-nine. The total for the brigade was 330 casualties. The 7th Brigade lost over 450 officers and men. Seven Leicestershire Yeomanry officers were killed and five were wounded. In the ranks, the Leicestershires had 180 casualties, making a total of over 190, all told, out of a strength of 300. The 8th Brigade's list of over 300 brought the total of killed and wounded for the 3rd Division to more than 1,100.

A patrol of 15th Hussars, under Lieutenant

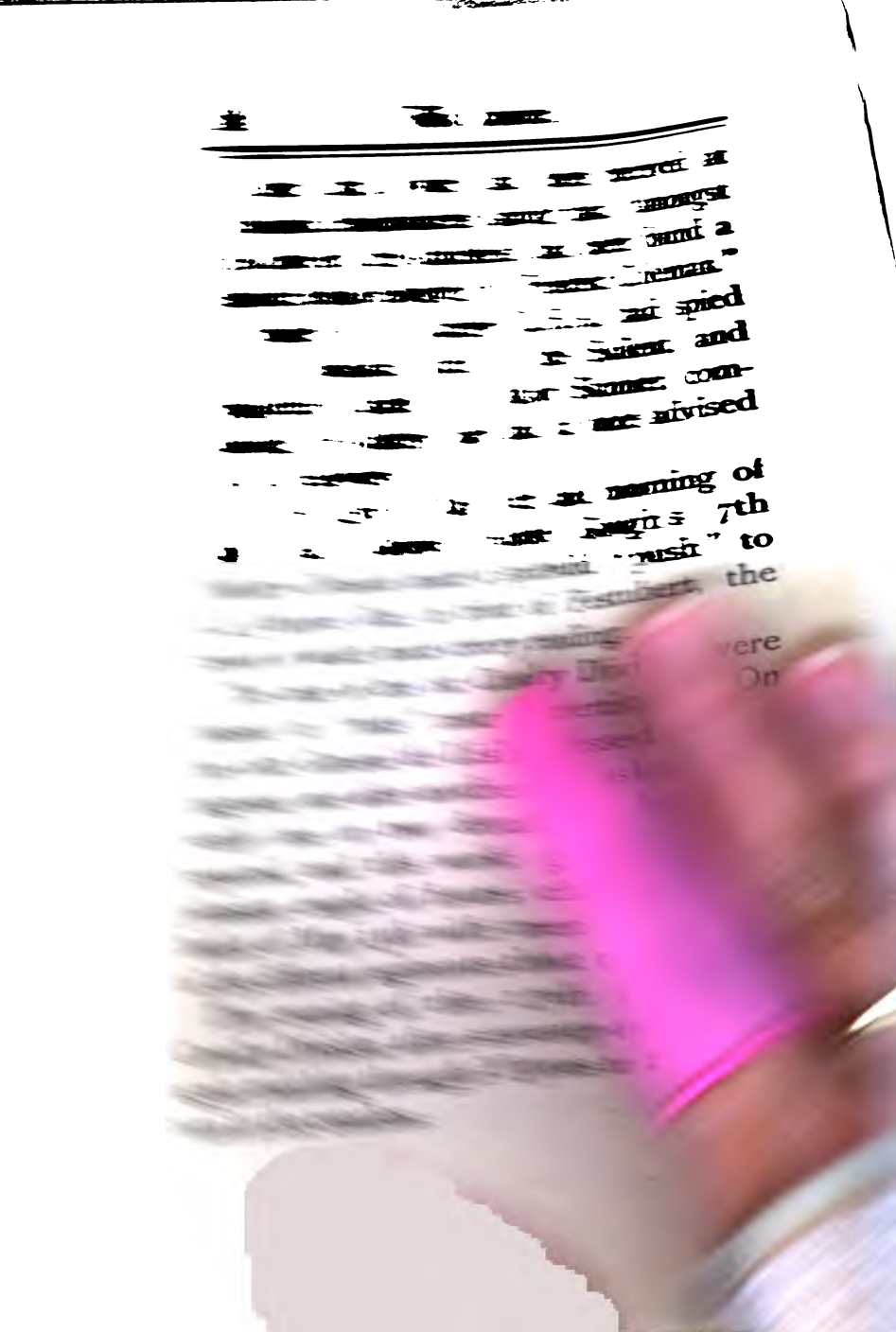
Kenneth Maclane, while the regiment was holding a part of the line to the north of Verlorenhoek, went up to the German first line trenches during the afternoon and found a section of them deserted, which showed the Huns were little better satisfied with the strategical location of their line than we had been with parts of ours.

Visits to Potijze from time to time meant coming close to big shell-bursts, but the fury of the 13th had made the itinerant shell-fire of the 14th so insignificant in contrast that we paid little attention to even the biggest of the Black Marias.

That night the 2nd Cavalry Division, General Kavanaugh commanding, relieved the 1st and 3rd Divisions on a narrowed front, the infantry closing in on the sides. Before morning of the 15th our tired men were on their way back to billets for a well-earned rest.

En route from Potijze to our headquarters at dusk on the 14th, my despatch case fell from the car. I went over the road carefully at daylight the following morning, and only desisted in my futile search when the "morning hate" made it foolish to tarry longer in the vicinity.

Great was my delight during the afternoon



Hussars' cook-house, Vlamertinghe huts, Vlamertinghe

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Group of Cavalry officers at the huts at Vlamertinghe

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The Salient had been comparatively quiet since the last German onslaught on the 13th, but howitzer shells were daily falling over the lines with tiresome regularity.

I was sent by General de Lisle to a house near Ypres, where we had planned to have a "basket dinner" before leaving for night quarters on the Menin Road. A very young staff-officer, instructed to guide me, misunderstood that such duty was required of him, and went off about some business of his own before I had been able to learn the location of the house.

Meeting "Rattle" Barrett, I asked him if he could give me the desired information.

"I don't know about the dinner part of it," said "Rattle"; "but your headquarters for the night are well east of Ypres, on the Menin Road. Go to the house nearest the château that stands by the Halte, where the railway crosses the road, and you can't miss it if you try."

The General had disappeared on foot, the juvenile staff-officer was nowhere to be found, so off I went, in accordance with Barrett's instructions.

Darkness was coming on. I passed along

lines of 2nd Cavalry Brigade troopers, marching toward Ypres and through it.

No lights were allowed, though my car was secure from liability of offence in that particular, for the electric installation had gone wrong, a not infrequent occurrence, and no one but a master electrician could coax a glimmer out of the headlamps.

Bump! Bump! I jolted from hole to hole in the smashed roadway. The streets were crowded with the machinery of the divisional relief in full swing. Ypres seemed more smashed, if possible, than when we had last passed through six days before. From the Grande Place down the Rue de Menin, to the bridge and Menin Road beyond, and well out past the fork, where the roads branched to Zonnebeke and Menin respectively, the path was narrow and tortuous. Piled high on either hand were heaps of *débris*, alternated with chasms, some sufficiently deep so that a fall to the bottom would put a car promptly *hors de combat*.

An unpleasant smell of burning flesh came from the smouldering mounds lining the way. Star-shells and trench lights from the firing line made it possible to see the road. Save

for their assistance I could not have made the journey without accident.

The house where we were to spend the next few days was easily found. The officers of the 80th Infantry Brigade were busy in it arranging reliefs when I arrived.

A house of stout brick, badly scarred and knocked about, covered a cellar, low roofed and filled with foul air, but reasonably safe from shell-fire.

In this underground sanctuary the flickering light of a dozen candles fell on crowded tables for signallers, around which the men not busy with 'phone or ticker were asleep, heads resting on their crossed arms. Officers pored over maps spread on other tables, or were engaged in close attention to the receipt or despatch of innumerable orders. Against one wall were three or four bedsteads, covered with mattresses that had borne the wearied forms of a long succession of British fighting men, from general officers to privates, and bore ample evidences of having done so.

A battery of British guns were firing from a position near by, and German shells were bursting close enough to cause an interruption of a conversation by their constant crashes.

No news could I find of General de Lisle until Captain Webb, of the Signal Corps, arrived.

"The General?" he said in reply to my query. "I think the General is in a house on the right of the road as you leave Ypres on the west."

I lost no time in getting under way. The return journey was like a bad dream. Shells fell in the vicinity of the road, but not so near as to damage the steadily flowing river of troops, ammunition and food transport, horse and mechanical; ambulances, motor-cycles, and once, another car.

A fatiguing house-to-house search landed me at the spot where dinner had been. Orders left for me instructed me to bring various impedimenta to the Menin Road; so, for the third time, I ploughed through Ypres and toward the Halte, where at last I found de Lisle. Nor was that by any means the last trip over that route that I was to make that night. But enough of motoring troubles.

On the 18th it rained with dour persistency.

The 1st Cavalry Division line ran south from the Ypres-Roulers railway, past the west shore of the Bellewaarde Lake. It dipped south-east

around the ruins of the Hooge Château and to the east of where Hooge once stood. Crossing the Menin Road, the front threaded the Sanctuary Wood, on the eastern edge of which the enemy were entrenched.

The position in the Sanctuary Wood was the extreme easterly promontory of the Ypres Salient, and not many yards west of the line which the 1st Cavalry Division held in February and March.

General de Lisle's cellar headquarters were less than 2,000 yards from the nearest front-line trench, and Hooge itself was not much further distant.

In an adjacent farm, which had been abandoned for many days, dead cattle and chickens lay about the yard. The table in the living room showed the family had decamped at meal time, evidently hurried by a shell which shaved a corner off the house. They left without waiting to gather up any of their simple belongings.

The lonely cows ambled inquisitively toward me, and were evidently greatly appreciative of a thorough milking, though few cared to drink milk from cows pastured in that poisoned zone, where every inch of ground was septic.

On a dash through Ypres at daybreak I again saw the poor hunted collie. Many mongrels thereabouts were frankly glad of a kind word and a pat on the head, but the high-bred, beautiful collie, his splendid coat matted and bedraggled, was so thoroughly frightened that all my efforts to get close to him were fruitless. It was wicked to leave him to death by a chance shell, and more than one of us risked carrying away a shell-souvenir in a vain attempt to save him.

At an early hour de Lisle said: "Find a shelter of some sort for your car, President. Don't forget that the Germans turn their shells down this road a bit at times."

A search resulted in the discovery of a maltster's, where some push-cyclists attached to a battalion of King's Royal Rifles cordially offered to make room for my battered conveyance. A passing ammunition train the night before had ripped off a front mud-guard, and a horse ambulance had crumpled one of the rear guards, while a transport mule had endeavoured to climb into the tonneau, to the sad detriment of my folded cape hood.

I never met a more cheery lot than those K.R.R. cyclists, who generously insisted on

my sharing a tin of steaming hot tea and warming myself at their comfortable fire. They showed me a pump in the ruins of a house adjoining, enabling me to get a rare wash, and a still rarer shave, giving me a quite respectable appearance in comparison with my comrades of the 1st Cavalry Division Staff.

During the morning the General sent me to a riddled château not far distant, where General Mullens had placed 2nd Cavalry Brigade headquarters. An attempt to use the remains of the drawing-room as a more comfortable habitation than the cellar, was abandoned during the day, as coal-boxes fell with annoying regularity in the chateau yard.

A call at the headquarters of General Arbuthnot, C.R.A. of the 28th Division, in a house west of Ypres, found my lost despatch case had been sent there by Skinner of H Battery, to whom General Arbuthnot had kindly wired offering to keep it until I could call and reclaim it.

At Arbuthnot's headquarters I met a captain of his staff, who had been a military attaché in China before the Boxer troubles in 1900, and who knew many of the acquaintances I

had made when campaigning with General Gaselee in the war with China.

In the course of conversation, I mentioned the prevailing belief in many quarters that unwritten truces existed between British and German gunners with regard to shelling certain areas. I instanced Dickebusch, a continual home of one of our divisional headquarters, which had been unshelled until our guns hammered a town in the German lines where Hun headquarters were thought to have been located, and thereafter was inundated with a steady rain of shell-fire for many days.

"Some peculiar things of that sort have happened," said the Captain. "The Divisional headquarters to which I was recently attached, occupied, near the line, a château which for months had not been visited by a German shell. I became possessed with the idea, without any real evidence to which to attribute it, that so long as our lot did not shell the Hollebeke Château, our house would be free from a Hun shelling. The Hollebeke Château was in the German lines, and while I did not, of course, know positively, I felt sure it contained some German brigade or divisional headquarters. Many a time our batteries fired

at enemy batteries on all sides of the Hollebeke Château, but not once was it made a target by our gunners."

"For week after week this condition of affairs continued, and was often the subject of comment among us. Naturally, in the absence of communication of any sort between the opposing forces, all this may have been mere coincidence.

"One day, returning from a walk, I entered the drive to our château just as Hun shells began to rain upon us. The shrapnel came thick and fast for several minutes, and the Divisional Commander and some of his staff officers had very narrow escapes. One shrapnel bullet passed through a wall only ten or twelve inches from the General's head.

"None of our divisional guns had been firing for some hours, but another battery in the vicinity had been doing quite a bit of shelling that morning. Curious, I asked the aeroplane observer who had been directing the fire of that battery what target he had given them.

"'I went up to direct their fire on some German guns reported to be near the Hollebeke Château,' the observer told me. 'I couldn't locate the described spot, so directed our

battery to throw a few shells into the château itself. Our gunners at once registered one lyddite through the roof and four shells right through the face of the building. I'll bet we made it hot for any Boches that were inside.'

"Comparing times," continued the Captain, "I learned that the Hollebeke Château received its shelling exactly ten minutes before our head-quarters château was shelled by the Huns. What made the incident more curious was the fact that for weeks our batteries did no more damage to the Hollebeke Château and never again, at least until I left it, did our château have a German shell near it."

The rain softened the earth about the dug-outs in front of Ypres, and soon an epidemic of caved-in sides and roofs was raging all along the line, assisted by Black Marias, which shook the moist ground until dug-out supports fell and walls collapsed wholesale. A captain of the 18th Hussars was in a dug-out roofed by an iron bedstead. A small landslide brought down the beams above and the bedstead fell, so striking the Hussar officer that his neck was broken and he was instantly killed.

The 19th, 20th, and 21st of May passed quickly, the three brigades of the Division

changing from front line to support dug-outs and back again in relays as the days succeeded each other.

On the 21st the sun came out, bright and strong, and justified a few minutes' delay *en route* through Ypres to obtain some photographs. The town was sadly depressing. Earthquake and conflagration might produce as much ruin, but could hardly arrange it so fantastically.

In Ypres Madame Caprice came hand in hand with Devastation and Death. In diabolical mood she flung the shattered buildings of the staid old town hither and thither with an eye to the spectacular. The grotesque met one's glance on every side. Only a James Pryde could have done justice on canvas to such a scene.

After a thunderstorm of almost tropical intensity on the night of the 21st, the 1st Cavalry Division troopers were relieved, and soon after daylight were sleeping soundly in the huts and the adjacent farms near Vlamertinghe. The 22nd and 23rd of May they spent in resting, and on the evening of the 23rd again went back into the trench line.

General de Lisle returned for his rest to new quarters at Esquelbecq, in a thirteenth

century château which boasted the honour of having once been stormed by Marlborough.

The 14th Division of the "K" Army was billeted near Esquelbecq, and had been placed in the newly formed 6th Corps. Allenby's 5th Corps then consisted of the 28th Division, 9th Division (the first of the "K" Divisions to arrive in France), and the Northumberland Territorial Division. The 6th Corps, containing the 4th Division, the 27th Division, and the new 14th Division was placed under the command of General Keir.

On the evening of May 23rd, while the troopers of the 1st, 2nd and 9th Cavalry Brigades tramped through Ypres once more, and took over part of the sodden trench-line of the Salient, General de Lisle again took up headquarters in the big château not far west of the demolished town.

The Salient front trenches led over the line that was taken up after the reconstruction following the hard fighting on May 13th. Wilson's 4th Division reached from the French right, near the Ypres-Yser Canal on the north, to the Canadian Farm, then past the Ypres-Passchendaele Road to the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road near Verlorenhoek.

View of the 13th century château at Esquelbecque

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"Jeff" Phipps-Hornby and Frederic Coleman comparing underpinning outside Ypres, May, 1915; the thinnest and thickest "supports" in the 1st Cavalry Division

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From the Zonnebeke Road south, across the Ypres-Roulers Railway, as far as the Bellewaarde Lake, troops of the 28th Division composed the firing line.

They joined the left flank of the 18th Hussars, who occupied a position on the south side of the Bellewaarde Lake and in front of the Hooge Château, the trenches at that point being about thirty yards to the east of the château ruins. The right of the 18th Hussars rested on the Menin Road, and close behind them in reserve were three score odd York and Durham Tommies who had been sent up to dig.

South of the Menin Road, in the Sanctuary Wood, came the 9th Lancers, 11th Hussars, Queen's Bays, and 5th Dragoon Guards, respectively.

The 4th Dragoon Guards, 15th Hussars, and 19th Hussars were in reserve in the G.H.Q. line.

The night was less disturbed by gun-fire than usual, and even the rifle fire and itinerant sniping were of less volume than for weeks past.

General de Lisle, noticing the strong westerly breeze die away, and the wind shift to the east during the course of the afternoon, sent a

warning to the troops in the trenches to be on the look out for a German gas attack next morning.

At earliest light on Whit Monday, the 24th of May, the Hun gas came.

Before three o'clock in the morning, the yellow-green haze was drifting slowly on the light breezes that heralded the coming of the dawn.

Over the eastern front of the Salient the smoke-cloud came from near Wieltje to the Zonnebeke road, and on to the south over the Menin Road.

The 28th Division troops, from the Ypres-Roulers railway to the Bellewaarde Lake, were in the thick of it, and were driven back *en masse.*

The trenches of the 18th Hussars and 9th Lancers were also in the path of the noxious fumes; but the 1st Cavalry Brigade troops further south escaped them.

For an hour the gas rolled westward, accompanied by a cyclone of shell-fire, and followed by a determined infantry attack.

No part of the cavalry line felt the gas more than the left of the 18th Hussars, which was held by a squadron under command of Captain

MacLachlan, who arrived at Vlamertinghe from England at seven o'clock the night before. MacLachlan, with some of the half dozen other officers and 130 men sent out to replace the casualties suffered by the 18th Hussars on May 13th, was tramping through Ypres within half an hour after he joined the regiment. New to Flanders and the Ypres Salient, his experience of a gas attack before he had been in the firing line twelve hours was a trying one.

MacLachlan was impressed by the warning to be on the watch for gas, and was in his forward trenches, awake and alert. His respirator was ready, and he repeatedly told his troopers to see that theirs were ready also.

The gas was actually upon the men before they could distinguish the poison-clouds from the early morning haze that frequently hung over the lake.

The first thick mantle of gas scattered the 18th Hussars somewhat, but enough of them remained in the trenches to hold on until a German machine-gun opened on them from their left rear. Seizing the advantage offered by the retirement of the 28th Division troops,

the Huns came on as swiftly as the dispersing gas would allow, and soon were well behind the 18th line.

MacLachlan, later in the day, tried to write a diary of what happened to him during the early morning hours, but it contained little detail. To piece together a coherent story of such events was difficult.

"3.15 a.m., gassed out. 3.30, in again. 4.30, some York and Durham Light Infantry officers showed up. 5.15, twelve men left out of my sixty-one. 5.30, six men left. 6.30, 15th Hussars coming up." So ran the diary.

The Germans poured around the Bellewaarde Lake on either side of it, and drove the few remaining 18th Hussars out of the trenches by an outflanking movement with sheer weight of numbers. The troopers retired across the Menin Road and trailed over the shell-swept fields toward Zillebeke, and then on to the southern edge of Ypres.

While the trenches on the lakeside and around the Hooge Château were being torn from the grasp of the 18th Hussars, the 9th Lancers on the right, across the Menin Road, were fighting like mad.

The gas so filled their trenches that at some

points the troopers leaped on the parapets into the clearer air above, in full view of the advancing Huns, and poured a fire into the German ranks that dropped dozens of the enemy like shot rabbits.

Captain Rex Benson, howling like a dervish to make his instructions audible above the din of battle, mounted a high bastion and so directed the stream of fire of his squadron that the oncoming rush in front of that trench was stemmed.

A rifle-bullet smashed through Benson's arm and badly shattered the bone, but he held on in spite of his wounds until the first fierce Hun attack was repulsed.

Major Beale-Browne, commanding the 9th Lancers, at once realised the danger to his left flank as the German bullets began to pour into it across the Menin Road. Down the south bank of the highway ran a communication trench, which Beale-Browne at once ordered to be transformed into a defence against a Hun attack from the position that had been won by the enemy from the 18th Hussars.

A small infantry counter-attack to recover the lost ground at Hooge failed, though two companies of the Buffs got a foothold in some

trenches north of the Menin Road, and not far from Hooge Château.

Beale-Browne's headquarters were in the Louave Wood, behind the Sanctuary Wood, and not far distant from the Menin Road. He and Captain "Bimbo" Reynolds, the Adjutant of the 9th, who had been twice wounded that morning, constituted the bulk of the garrison of the Louave Wood, when they saw three or four hundred Germans advancing from the north towards the Menin Road, preparatory to attacking the wood, and thus gaining the rear of the 9th Lancers' trenches.

At that moment some York and Lancaster Territorials, who had been sent up from reserve in a wood south of the 9th, arrived. Beale-Browne at once sent to the Infantry Brigade for more of them. Lining the northern edge of the little wood with the Terriers he waited until the Huns began to stream across the roadway, then swept them back with volley after volley at close range.

This move and the gallant stand made by the 9th Lancers in their front line trenches, ably aided by the York and Lancaster lads, saved the day. A couple of squadrons of the 15th Hussars also played a gallant part in saving

our important position south of the Menin Road.

The cost to the 9th Lancers was heavy, Captain Francis Grenfell, Captain "Algy" Court, and Captain Noel Edwards were killed, the latter dying from the effects of gas poisoning after he had been taken to the hospital at Bailleul.

Four other officers of the 9th were wounded, several men were killed by the gas, and forty-eight hours later the number of casualties, including those gassed and missing, was still over 100.

While the strenuous struggle was proceeding in the front line trenches, little was known of the actual results of the German attack. Every man attached to Beale-Browne's headquarters, except "Bimbo" Reynolds, was out of commission, save the telegraphists, who hung on in the poisoned air of the signals dug-out until all the wires were swept away by the German shells, and all communication with the rear rendered impossible.

General Meakin took over the field command of the Division, and Colonel "Tommy" Pitman again took the 1st Cavalry Brigade.

The 4th D.G.'s, 15th Hussars, and 19th

Hussars in reserve in the G.H.Q. line, were as badly gassed as though they had been in the front trenches.

In spite of this, they pushed their depleted ranks forward in support over ground where shells were bursting in scores and hundreds, and formed a new line along a road that ran north from and at right angles to the Menin Road, about 1,000 yards west of Hooge.

Here they held the enemy from making further inroads into our territory, fighting fiercely every hour of the long day.

The 15th Hussars and 19th Hussars suffered heavy casualties, and the 9th Cavalry Brigade lost one of its most popular officers in Captain Griffiths, its Brigade Major, who was killed by a shell.

The 4th Division front line held well, in spite of the gas. The only 4th Division trenches lost were along a front of 800 yards from the Canadian Farm to the Ypres-Passchendaele Road. The East Lancashires south of that road hung on with a bull-dog grip until help came and counter-attacks could be formed and launched to retake the ground that had been lost.

My friend in the 11th Hussars, from whose

diary I quoted a few paragraphs with reference to the part the gallant 11th played in the battle of May 13th, kept a most vivid series of notes as to what happened in front of the 1st Cavalry Brigade on that memorable 24th of May.

While the 11th Hussars were on the right of the 9th Lancers, and therefore on the fringe of the attack, a perusal of the following will give an idea of what it meant to be in the front line of the Ypres Salient on a bank holiday in 1915:—

"3 a.m.—Heavy firing, guns, rifles, Maxims, on our left; faint smell of gas; just as dawn breaks.

3.15.—All quiet on our immediate front, heavy shelling going on all round. Every wire cut between Brigade headquarters and ourselves, and with the artillery.

3.45.—Still no touch with Brigade headquarters, so messenger despatched. The headquarters of the 11th, Bays, and 5th D.G.'s are all close together in a wood behind the trench line. The Bays and 5th Dragoon Guards each have one squadron in hand; there are also three companies of the 4th East Yorks Territorials in brigade reserve in the same wood.

4.—The Bays send an officers' patrol to the left.

4.20.—Heavy firing still continues on our left. Telephone message sent to O.C. A Squadron: "Try and get information of situation on your left."

4.35.—Answer received: "Adjutant 9th Lancers just passed here. Reports their centre and left gassed. No attack so far."

4.45.—Lieutenant Milne's patrol of the Bays returned. Report 9th Lancers have been badly gassed, and retired from their trenches in places, leaving big gaps. Reinforcements have gone up, and line has, he thinks, been re-established.

5.—Captain Osborne, Brigade-Major, arrives from Brigade headquarters. They have all suffered severely from gas; the regiments in G.H.Q. line have caught it very badly. The shelling has been very heavy, great number of casualties, men streaming back from all parts of the line. When he left Brigade headquarters they were in ignorance of the situation in any part of the line. The only thing which kept their hopes up was that not a single man of the 1st Brigade had returned.

6.30.—Lieutenant Milne reports that he

went to Officer Commanding 9th Lancers, who told him that his line was complete to fifty yards north of the Menin Road. He has had many men gassed, and has used up all his supports to fill up gaps in the front line. He is pushing reconnaissance to his left. Heard that the Officer Commanding York and Lancaster Regiment had his battalion in a wood about 600 yards east of us, so went over and saw him. He has 1,000 men, and is reserve to the section of the line from our right to Hill 60. Got him to send two companies to the Officer Commanding 9th Lancers.

7.30.—Lieutenant Hartman, 11th Hussars, returned with his patrol. He had worked up to the Menin Road, where he had found Captain F. O. Grenfell, 9th Lancers, holding on with a very few men, and asking urgently for reinforcements of 200 men to strengthen his line. As Lieutenant Hartman was leaving, three platoons of infantry arrived.

9.—Heavy attack on Hooge. All our glasses are fixed on that point. The village (now only a few ruined houses) is on a piece of rising ground which commands, at close range, the rear of our position. Withdrew one of the 11th Hussars' Maxims and laid it on the village.

Can see our troops falling back. If Hooge goes, we are in the soup. 9th Lancers headquarters are in Louave Wood. Beale-Brown is in command. He has still got one company in hand.

10.—Still holding on at Hooge. Can see more of our infantry moving up from Louave Wood.

11.—Patrol reports "enemy have broken through 18th Hussars' line north of Menin Road, and are working down on the road in rear of Hooge." Hear heavy firing in that direction. Send Osborne to officer commanding Y. and L. to get him to send three companies to hold northern edge of Louave Wood, with machine-gun and detachment at farm west of it.

12 noon.—Message sent by runner to Brigade Headquarters: "Still holding on to Hooge, but Germans are astride the Menin Road. Could you push up counter-attack in that direction? My line of retreat is covered by German machine-guns in that direction. Several orderlies have been wounded going backwards and forwards."

12 noon.—First messenger returned from Brigade headquarters. Counter-attack is being organised. Messenger states that on his way

up he saw about 100 infantry straggling back from the lines on our right, stating that their "'ole battalion had been coot oop." If there is any truth in their statement, we are in a nasty position, so send off at once an officer's patrol in that direction to clear up the situation, and a squadron of the 5th D.G.'s to support the patrol and form a flank protection in direction of Maple Copse. No firing has been heard at all on our right.

12.5 p.m.—Learn that there is a company of Royal Engineers in the wood near the York and Lancaster headquarters, so send them following order: "Proceed with Y. and L. guide to O.C. 9th Lancers in Louave Wood, and ask him if he can find work for your fifty men in consolidating the position on northern edge of wood."

12.15.—Germans attacking right of 9th Lancers' line and left of A Squadron, 11th Hussars, with bombs. They are reported to have broken the 9th Lancers' line at one point, but been driven out again.

12.30.—Captain Lawson reports that section of trench held by Territorials between his left and 9th Lancers has been captured by Germans. They are working down his trench with bombs.

The captured section slopes up from the stream, and looks down on the A Squadron trench.

12.35.—Interview the officer commanding 4th Yorks, explain the situation, and tell him to take another company up, and with the one already in the second line form a barrier behind the captured portion, getting touch with the 9th Lancers on his left and the 11th Hussars on his right.

1.—Message sent to officer commanding 9th Lancers: "Have pushed up a support to form a barrier behind the captured trench. Endeavour to get touch with them from the switch trench. A counter attack is now taking place from Potitjze towards Hooge."

1.30.—The pressure on the Menin Road seems to be relieved. The Germans are still bombing down Lawson's trench, but A Squadron are putting up a good fight with bombs. Lieut. Gunter has been killed.

2.25.—Message sent by runner to Brigade headquarters. "At about 12.15 Germans captured portion of 9th Lancers' trench close to 11th Hussars' left. Company of East Yorks sent up to form barrier behind broken line. Switch on 9th Lancers' right is now held instead of advanced trench. Western edge of

Hooge still held by mixed force of men. Send me information of counter attack, for if Germans establish themselves on Menin Road during the night, position of brigade becomes untenable. If it is proposed to retire from here it would have to be done at night. Please inform Officer Commanding 83rd Brigade that I have had to call on all the York and Lancasters except 250 men. Following is disposition of line at present as known to me:—1st Brigade line as taken over last night. 2nd Brigade—9th Lancers, weakened by losses, with left on Menin Road; right broken but being secured. Remainder of 9th Lancers, with York and Lancasters, have formed a line right along north edge of wood facing north. They have two machine-guns on their outer flank and patrols to the Menin Road.

2.45.—Message sent to Brigade headquarters: "Please arrange to send up to-night two dozen hand grenades per regiment, and detonators, most important; also two dozen rifle grenades per regiment and two dozen extra detonators per regiment, as the bombs here are without detonators; also as many gas-sprayers as possible. Ask 1st Cavalry Division to send up trench mortars with Royal Horse

Artillerymen or Royal Engineers to man them, as our men don't understand them. They are urgently required."

3 p.m.—No further developments. Situation well in hand, but hope that counter-attack is developing on north side Menin Road. Lawson is holding on to the line of stream, but position is untenable unless 2nd Brigade can re-establish original line on their right. Make dispositions for holding new line from left of B Squadron down communication trench to the support trench; thence along to where it joins up with front line. The situation on the right down as far as Hill 60 reported all right. The trenches near Hill 60 visited by our patrol did not even know that there was a fight going on. They thought all the firing was a long way to their left.

4 p.m.—Situation unchanged. Have got majority of A Squadron back into communicating trench, moved up squadron of the Bays to complete the line and join up with 9th Lancers. Send following message to Lawson, who is still holding on at the stream:—

"Most of your squadron are now back in communicating trench. Squadron of the Bays and infantry are holding the second line. I cannot send you up any more support; doubt

your doing any good by holding on to present line. If you cannot get away now, wait until dark."

4.—Message sent to Officer Commanding 9th Lancers:—"Portion of front line marked with crosses on accompanying sketch, has gone; suggest your falling back and holding line marked with red dots." Operations carried on without any further alarms till dusk. We saw the right flank of the counter-attack coming up towards Hooge. The Y. and L. co-operated in this movement.

5.—Following received from Officer Commanding York and Lancasters:—

"Our attack on the Menin Road has been successful. All the enemy have been driven back off the road as far as our left flank rests. The companies have withdrawn to Louave Wood after leaving a post on Menin Road, facing north. Patrols have been pushed on to the north to try and get touch with the counter-attack, but these patrols will now be withdrawn, and the Oxford Hussars will be asked to send similar patrols. Some of the enemy have been killed. Have collected their papers and identity discs, and will send them to Brigade headquarters."

Soon after dark we received orders that the Brigade would be relieved to-night, but it was not till past midnight that the relieving regiments arrived. During the hours between dusk and midnight the enemy attacked vigorously with bombs both B Squadron and A Squadron trenches. At midnight the 16th Lancers arrived to take over. It was obvious that it was going to be a tight fit to defeat daylight. Not a moment was lost, but it was nearly two o'clock before the last squadron was relieved. The squadrons moved off independently, keeping as far as possible on the low ground. A violent fusilade commenced on both flanks of the Salient, and "Spares" were fairly flying about over our heads. The Germans were making another gas attack, and C Squadron, which took a more northerly route, caught it slightly. Our casualties were slight during the withdrawal, and it was quite light by the time we reached Ypres. We raced on through the town, as shells were falling about in a most unpleasant manner. We got back to Vlamertinghe at 4.30 a.m., the men absolutely dead beat, having walked seven miles across country at top speed. We dossed down to sleep, most of the men preferring the

open to the wooden huts. Forty-eight hours without a check has been a bit more than tiring. The casualties for the 24th of May were two officers killed, twelve men killed, twelve wounded, and four died of wounds. Lieutenant Poole, who was only slightly wounded on the way back to Ypres, unfortunately succumbed to tetanus a few days later at Boulogne.

After sweeping over the firing-line and drifting past the G.H.Q. reserve line, on that Whit Monday morning, the gas still moved westward.

H and I Battery men, caught in their dug-outs, had a liberal share, and still more of the poisonous fumes gathered in ruined Ypres, or floated on to our divisional headquarters further to the west. Some of the gas was carried as far back as Vlamertinghe, between four and five miles from the German trenches.

"Willie" Du Cros, running with his ambulance convoy from Vlamertinghe to a dressing station well west of Ypres, was sufficiently overcome by gas to be for some hours dangerously ill.

Hardly a member of the 1st Cavalry Division Staff, including General de Lisle himself, escaped the gas fumes. Red and watery eyes, a pale bluish tinge to the complexion, violent head-

aches, and continual coughing were universal for the greater part of the forenoon.

Gas shells continually burst over Ypres and the roads near it. More than once I ran through pockets of gas, apparently caused by these gas shells. Every one of us wore respirators or masks when near Ypres, though "Babe" Nicholson inhaled sufficient gas through his respirator to render him unconscious for five minutes after a "dash up front."

General Mullens, of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, and Captain Paget, his Brigade Major, were brought in a dangerous condition to our head-quarters. By night they were able to walk about, but for a time it seemed quite possible neither would recover.

That evening I asked General Mullens, who was looking very ill, if he thought he was free from the effects of the poisoning. "Somewhat," he answered. "No one could imagine what the experience is like. The helplessness and mental suffering of it are beyond description."

Ypres came in for another terrific bombardment that day. The Menin Bridge and the Menin Road proved such death-traps that they were "closed to traffic" before the day was over.

Romer Williams, of General Mullens's staff, came through Ypres with a message just as I was going up.

"You have a fine bruise on your forehead," said I, pointing to a raw bump the size of a goose-egg. "How did you get it?"

"I haven't an idea," he answered; "unless a shell bounced off it. Some of 'em have come close enough, so I thought they *might* have done so. As I was coming back down the Menin Road, an ammunition limber passed me, the horses at full gallop. I watched them cross the railway metals at the halt. The limber jumped up into the air when it hit the crossing and the horses seemed to be skimming the ground, they were going at such a pace. Just as the limber bumped up, a flash came, right over it, and when the smoke rolled away the road led clean on eastward, absolutely empty. Not a sign of horse, man or limber remained. A big howitzer shell must have hit it squarely on the outfit, and swept it into the ditch like the wind would sweep away a leaf. It was a terrible thing to see."

Colonel Browne of the R.A.M.C. and his staff worked like Trojans. Browne had not slept since 7 o'clock on the previous morning,

and had a bad touch of gas, like everyone else near headquarters.

At break of day the roads were full of panting, coughing stragglers from the front. Scores on scores staggered into the big front gates of the château, and sank exhausted and suffering on the deep grass that lined the drive-way. The medical officers hastily gave such relief as they could and packed the ambulances full of the wounded and the worst of the gas cases.

By 9 o'clock in the morning 600 gassed men and 160 wounded had passed through Colonel Browne's hands, more than four-fifths of them members of the 28th or 4th Division units.

The number of men who were wounded by shell fire when coming back toward Ypres from the gas-filled trenches was legion.

Five signal-corps men, attached to the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, were badly poisoned, but managed to get back as far as the big square at Ypres. They were in such a sorry state that a passing officer advised them to lie down on the broken cobbles of the Grande Place until an ambulance could be sent for them. They stretched out in a pathetic row, and had

not lain there long when a Black Maria lit at their feet, shoving them half a dozen yards over the stones still in line, every man of the five dead, killed before he knew of the coming of the shell.

All day shattered men were brought to the divisional dressing station near the château gates. The wounds from the shells were terrible.

A wounded sergeant of the Cheshires refused a ride from east of Ypres in an ambulance, cheerily saying that those who *could* walk should do so, and not occupy space required for those more severely hurt. He carried back his full kit, tramping sturdily along with a grim smile on his fine face. At the dressing station a nasty bullet hole in his shoulder was disclosed, which would have laid many a man flat on his back.

"Good man, of the old school. New ones can't touch 'em," commented a grizzled hospital orderly, as the Cheshire sergeant passed out of the room.

A Tommy, with bright eyes peeping from a purple bit of face all but hidden by a mass of white bandages, insisted on telling his story to anyone who would listen.

"He has told his bally yarn half a dozen times, sir," complained a hospital orderly to the doctor. "I told him he was not to talk, but he just can't keep his bloomin' mouth shut, he says."

"Nasty wound, too," remarked the doctor, as we watched the talkative individual. "Bullet went clean through his face, in one cheek and out the other, and carried away every one of his upper teeth."

But his injury had apparently increased his volubility. We could hear his tale as he poured it into the ear of a gunner, wounded in both legs and unable to escape.

"You see the ol' gas stuff got us bad, some on us," he explained. "But I got this 'ere bloomin' smash in the jawr, and that took up so much o' me bally time I didn't pay no attention to no gas, you believe *me!* I warsn't the only bloke lyin' there. They was a fair lot o' our chaps near me.

"The snipin' was cruel. Some o' the poor blokes that was bloomin' well shot already got 'it agin. I was jest thinkin' mine was comin' when wot oh! 'ere comes three big Prooshuns, tall as 'ouses. Good-day, Bill, says I to meself. You next! It'll be the butt for *your* nut from these 'ere lobsters.

"But not a bit. They ups with me and carts me over to a 'ouse. Leastwys it *wor* a 'ouse, wonct. An' wot do *you* think! Them Prooshuns give me a bloomin' fill o' cold coffee, like Christians!

"'Bout this time the Buffs was comin' on an' my Prooshuns had to skin out, rapid. They didn't do nothin' to me only say, 'Ta-ta!' in Dutch. The fire got so 'ot I crawled off down a crick-thing full of the stinkinest stuff that ever got called water. I rounded around, after a while, an' come up back o' them Buffs a little. They saw me and bloomin' near shot my 'ead off, so I lay still.

"Then I crawled more. I 'ad got in front of some more o' our chaps by then. Big 'uns was goin' orf right there, an' 'eads was down, you bet. I was gettin' closer, when a fat-'ead sees me an' starts shootin'. I 'ollered, an' the more I 'ollered the more 'e let off 'is silly gun. 'E 'it my pore ol' cap, 'e did. Then some cuss shuts 'im orf, an' they come out and gets me.'

"'Who are you?' says a orficer chap. 'I'm damned if I know,' says I. 'I've been shot at by everybody I've seen all mornin', except three big 'Uns.'

"'Mad,' says a cove, short-like. 'Send 'im in.'

"'An' 'ere I am, with no jawr much left.'

"'Humph,' commented the doctor as he walked away. 'Guess he could stand the loss of some more jaw and not kill him. He seems to have plenty left.'"

A more sinister story was told by a trooper shot through the thigh. He said the Germans got into one of our trenches, in which they found him and nine of his comrades. Five of the ten had been hit. The Huns told the wounded to crawl away to as safe a place as they could find, and they straightway wriggled off down the trench, as directed.

With a scowl on his face a big German said to the five unwounded men, "We don't want *you*. Go!" He pointed his finger to the shell-swept field that led toward the British reserve line. The five started on a run, but had not gone far when the rat-tat-tat of a machine-gun behind them commenced. In an instant the air was full of bullets. Four of the five men fell dead. The fifth was the man who told the story. He fell, he said, at the first sound of the quick-firer, and thus escaped with a bullet through his leg.

Counter-attack followed counter-attack as the day wore on. We launched a small one at 2.30 p.m., a larger one an hour later, and a still larger one was planned for 6 o'clock. This last was to win back the lost trenches around the Hooge Château, past the Bellewaarde Lake, and on to the north.

The British guns cleared the way splendidly for the 6 o'clock attack. "Mother" shells fell into a line of ruined houses near Hooge. The Germans had placed several machine-guns there, and as the 9·2 projectiles knocked the bricks about their ears they scampered out like chickens. A machine-gun not far away in the 9th Lancers' trenches poured a hail of bullets into the Huns as they left cover, and numbers were seen to fall.

The Royal Fusiliers were attacking, but when their line "got up," the advantage was lost, other enemy machine-guns had been brought into the German trenches, and the attack "fizzled out," no real gain having been made.

So night closed in. By 2 o'clock in the morning of the next day the fresh 2nd Cavalry Division troopers had relieved the tired men of the 1st Cavalry Division, who were once more brought back to the Vlamertinghe huts.

The Cavalry had lost heavily, and was still to lose before the second battle of Ypres was finished, though the ground won by the Huns on the 24th of May marked their furthermost westerly advance.

The part played by the infantry in the second Ypres struggle was greater, numerically, than that of the cavalry, but the work done by the troopers was of inestimable value. Their resistance broke the back of the enemy's onslaught at its most tense moments.

The work of the Queen's Bays on May 13th, and the 9th Lancers and 15th Hussars on May 24th, will long live in the annals of the British Army.

The following officers were awarded the Distinguished Service Order, the task of selection for the awards from so great a number of instances of gallant conduct during these May days being a most difficult one :—

Major George Harold Absell Ing, 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays). At Ypres on May 13th, 1915, when the line was broken beyond the right flank of his regiment, he came out of his trench in the front line, stood on the road in the open under heavy shell-fire, stopped the retirement of forty men of another unit, and

turned them into his section of the defence. The good results of his gallant action were far-reaching.

Major Charles William Henry Crichton, 10th (Prince of Wales Own Royal) Hussars. Near Ypres, on May 13th, 1915, showed conspicuous gallantry and ability in collecting and rallying men who were retiring under heavy shell-fire through the 10th Hussars' position. In our counter-attack he continued to direct operations, giving great encouragement to his men whilst he lay in the open under heavy shell-fire with his leg shattered.

Captain John Grey Porter, 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers. On May 10th, 1915, when a very heavy attack was made on the front line near Hooge, Captain Porter went up to the infantry line there and brought back very valuable information regarding the situation. On May 13th he rendered the greatest possible assistance in taking messages under terrific shell-fire to various parts of the line, and reporting on various local situations. He set an example of coolness and total disregard of danger that was beyond all praise. He has been twice wounded previously in this campaign.

The following eight cavalry officers were awarded the Military Cross for their work in the Salient :—

Captain Stewart Graham Menzies, D.S.O., 2nd Life Guards. Near Ypres, on May 13th, 1915, after his Commanding Officer had been wounded, displayed conspicuous ability, coolness and resource in controlling the action of his regiment and rallying the men.

Captain Edward Archibald Ruggles-Brise, Essex Yeomanry, T.F. For conspicuous gallantry and ability, near Ypres, on May 13th, 1915, when he held a position gained in a counter-attack, although entirely isolated, until ordered to withdraw at night. He had only fifty men under his command.

Captain Guy Franklin Reynolds, 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers. For splendid work on May 24th, 1915, near Hooge. When the head-quarters of the 9th Lancers were gassed, he constantly brought reports from the trenches under very heavy fire, and helped to reorganise the defence of the left section. Also when the enemy attempted to enter Louave Wood, he was invaluable in helping to reorganise the defence. He set the finest possible example of calmness, coolness, and courage

although suffering from gas and twice slightly wounded.

Captain Charles Joseph Leicester Stanhope, 15th (The King's) Hussars. For gallant and skillful handling of his squadron, near Hooge, on May 24th, 1915, with most valuable results. His squadron, having been badly gassed, he took forward the remnants, together with stragglers he collected, and on his own initiative, under very heavy shell-fire, reinforced the front line. He remained in action all day, and when the line on his left gave way he doubled back his flank with great skill, and continued with the utmost gallantry to hold the position.

Lieutenant Kenneth Douglas Lorne Maclaine of Lochbuie, 15th (The King's) Hussars (S.R.). Near Ypres, for good work in command of his squadron under trying circumstances, on May 13th, 1915. For gallant and skilful leading of a patrol on May 14th, by which he gained information of great value. He volunteered to lead this patrol, and pushed forward by day, a mile in front of our line, and returned with a good report as to the actual line then held by the enemy. For coolness, determination and skill in handling his squadron under difficult circumstances near Hooge on

May 24th, 1915. He had been ordered up with his squadron to reinforce the left of another cavalry regiment, when the line north of the Menin Road gave way, and the situation became critical. Lieutenant Maclaine showed great skill in taking up a new position, facing north and west to meet the new situation, and maintained his position under most critical circumstances until relieved at 2.15 the next morning. His action contributed greatly towards maintaining intact the line south of the road.

Lieutenant William Spurrett Fielding Johnson, Leicestershire Yeomanry, T.F. For conspicuous gallantry near Ypres on May 13th, 1915. Was with Major Martin, and continued the action until the squadron was reduced to thirteen men. Afterwards displayed great coolness in withdrawing to a flank and joining a cavalry brigade.

Lieutenant James Archibald Garton, North Somerset Yeomanry, T.F. Near Ypres on May 13th, 1915, showed great coolness and daring. Held his position throughout the day, notwithstanding that the trenches had been blown in, and inspired all ranks by his behaviour. After all senior officers were killed or wounded,

he assumed command of the regiment, displaying great judgment and initiative throughout.

Lieutenant Nigel Kennedy Worthington, 3rd Dragoon Guards (S.R.). Near Ypres on May 12th, 1915, showed great coolness and daring. He took over a new line of trenches just before dark, and to get round the line in daylight, he had to cross several open and fire-swept zones. On May 13th, at great risk, he came back several times to report.

From the foregoing list of honours it would be unfair to omit the Distinguished Service Order given for magnificent work a week after the fight on May 24th, to Major Philip Granville Mason, of the 3rd (Prince of Wales') Dragoon Guards. "Whilst in command of Hooge Fort and the adjoining trenches," the official report read, "he showed conspicuous gallantry and ability in holding the village and defence line allotted to him, notwithstanding a terrific bombardment for several hours every day from May 30th to June 2nd, 1915, in which practically all his trenches and dug-outs were blown in."

On the 25th the regiments took stock of their losses and began the work of refitting. I called at the headquarters of Colonel Burnett

of the 18th Hussars, hearing he was in a dangerous condition from gas poisoning. No one was allowed to see him, and fears for his recovery were expressed by those who attended him. Burnett was soon afterwards sent home, where he was compelled to spend many long months of convalescence before he was able to rejoin his regiment.

Acting Adjutant Hill, of the 18th Hussars, had not been able to make out any accurate list of casualties. Two officers of the regiment were known to have been killed by gas, and five others were wounded. The killed, wounded and missing totalled nearly 190 out of less than 300. Many of the missing, it was hoped, would prove to have been gassed but slightly, and be able soon to resume their duties.

As the sun went down that evening their comrades of the 9th Lancers buried the bodies of Francis Grenfell and "Algy" Court.

Court's face wore a smile, as though he was quietly sleeping. Grenfell, shot through the heart at the height of the battle, bore, too, a look of deep peace, as if at last he had cheerfully gone to a better country, to join his beloved brother "Rivy," from the shock of whose death, on the Aisne, Francis had never recovered.

Staunch friends and fine men, both Grenfell and Court.

Whatever Peace may bring us, it can never replace the ones War has taken.

But they have left behind them their example, and the memory of the clean, young manhood that England gave, without stint, to fight for the right. With that memory enshrined in the hearts of those they have left behind, victory lies not with the grave, for such lives are deathless.

At an early hour on the 26th of May, General de Lisle was apprised of his appointment to the command of the 29th Division, which had won splendid laurels under General Hunter Weston in the Dardanelles.

My long and pleasant association with de Lisle bade fair to close, much to my regret.

In the course of conversation I told the General how sorry I was that I was not to accompany him.

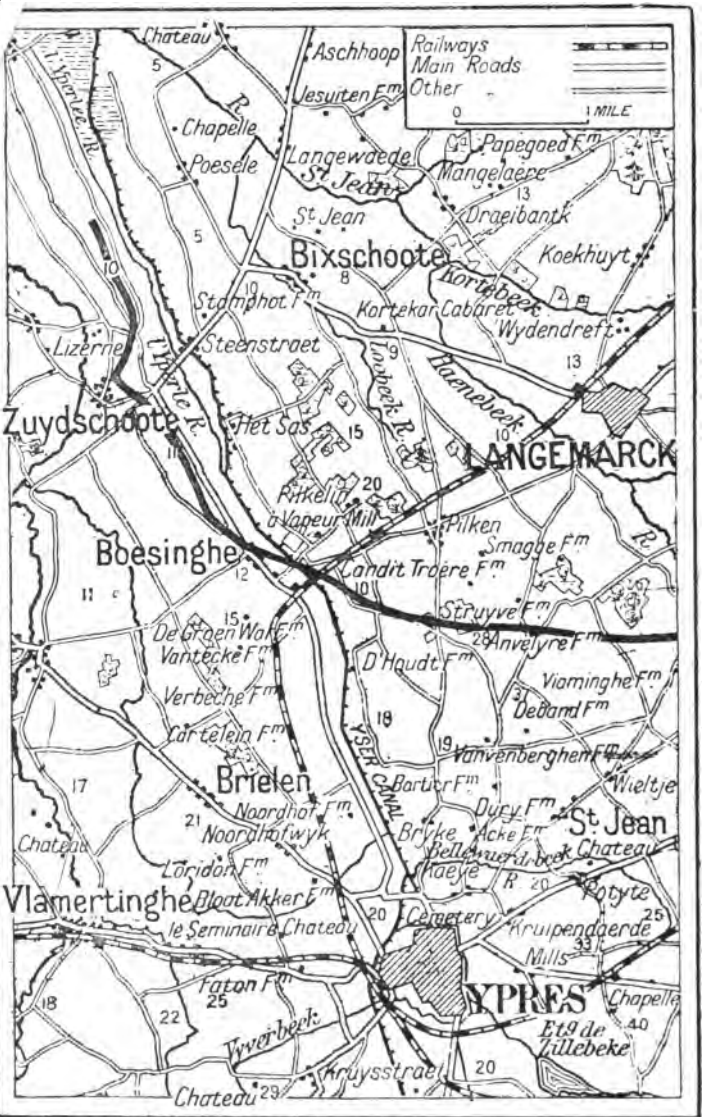
"I much wish that you were," said he. "I doubt if I can take you to the Dardanelles; but if you care to come with me to London and the War Office, I will do what I can to have you attached to my new Division."

After a morning of racing back and forth

between the front and St. Omer, we sped to Boulogne, arriving in time to catch the afternoon boat.

No one could have been kinder than General Long, the Director of Supplies and Transport at the War Office. In his office, next morning, I met General de Lisle; but General Long could only tell us that "it will very likely be a long, long time before motor cars will be required in the Dardanelles; and, as you know, Americans are not eligible for commissions in the British Army, even should you apply for one."

So back I went to General Headquarters in France, deeply sorry to say "Good-bye" to General de Lisle and his magnificent 1st Cavalry Division.



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